DOUBLE ISSUE FRACTURED MIDEAST: KHALIDI, SCHENKER, THE EDITORS

The Nation.

HIGH STAKES IN LAMONT VS. LIEBERMAN
John Nichols

THE LEFT WARMS TO REALISM
Eyal Press

TIMOTHY LEARY'S LONG, STRANGE TRIP
Neal Pollack

TOO LATE FOR EMPIRE

THE ORIGINS OF THE CRISIS OF THE REPUBLIC
BY JONATHAN SCHELL

AUGUST 14/21, 2006
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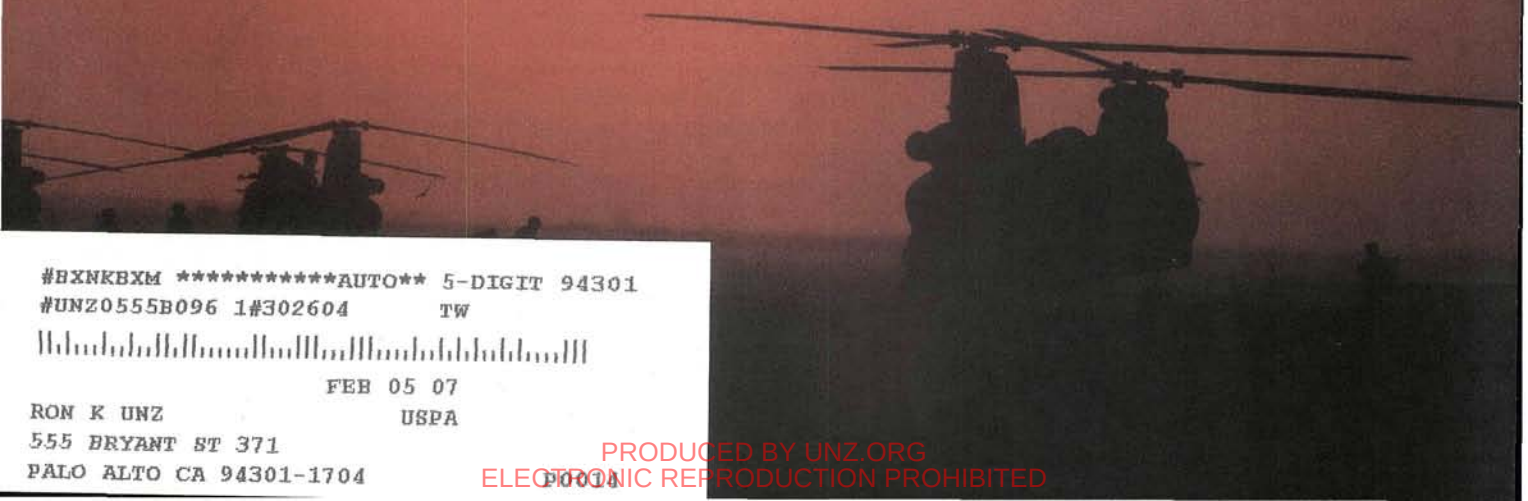

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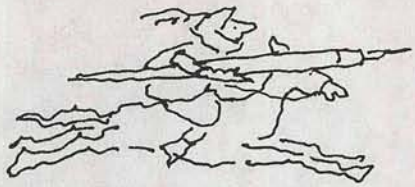

R.O. BLECHMAN

MOMMY SMEARIST

Red Hook, NY

■ Thanks to Katha Pollitt ["Subject to Debate," July 17/24] for a smart and sophisticated review of my ideas, but no thanks to the implication that I took my ideas from Rhona Mahony without crediting her. ("This crucial insight [that early decisions make later choices inevitable] was not originally Hirshman's but Rhona Mahony's, in her brilliant 1995 *Kidding Ourselves*, on which Hirshman rather heavily relies.") Thankfully for Western culture, the concept of causation did not actually originate in Mahony's late-twentieth-century book *Kidding Ourselves*. Nonetheless, the book was brilliant and an important inspiration to me. Accordingly, not only do I explicitly cite Mahony on page 57 of my book for the one idea that is truly and clearly no one's but hers (find a sharing spouse by marrying down), but in my second reference to her in the bibliography, I say, "Nothing in my book would have been possible without the groundbreaking work of this book." If you're out there, Rhona, know that you were properly acknowledged. Abrasive, Caitlin Flanagan clone and all the rest I can take. But I would never knowingly take someone else's ideas. LINDA HIRSHMAN

Charlottesville, Va.

■ Katha Pollitt once again reminds us that women's choice is not in a vacuum, that there are social pressures and biases and, in reality, a lack of real choices for women who want to be full human beings and parents. Linda Hirshman, on the other hand, used the *New York Times* Styles section to find her pool of educated married women, which formed the basis of her tirade against mommies retreating back home. Any idiot would tell you that the socioeconomic group depicted in that column is not representative of educated women. In a move reminiscent of *Newsweek*'s 1980s report on women over 30 snagging a spouse, Hirshman's notoriety-grab proves once again that slanted sensationalism obscures tougher truths every time. Thank goodness Katha Pollitt gets it: There are no sides to take here. Families with children and without trust funds face a set of lousy choices in an unsupportive world.

CATHY FINN-DERECKI

COLD WAR, WARM WORDS

Moscow

■ Thank you very much for Stephen F. Cohen's "The New American Cold War" [July 10]. I am very much impressed by the high level of understanding of Russia's social and political life from a foreign author and by such a comprehensive and deep analysis of modern Russia. Reading other Western mass media materials about Russia regularly, I can say that most of them repeat the same overused journalese—"former KGB colonel," "backsliding on democracy," etc.—recalling the best examples of Soviet propaganda. Dr. Cohen's article is an excellent exception to this. ALEXANDER SHVETSOV

Moscow

■ From many Russians, I thank Stephen F. Cohen for his professional manner and noninsular vision of the current problems of our country, as well as the issues of international policy in historic context. The prejudgments that we see throughout the Western press about the Russian people, economic issues and policies are very offensive. I came a long way from being scared of and hating America in the 1980s, through liking it till the mid-1990s, to understanding US and Russian interests, and back to fear and dislike of US policies toward Russia. I am glad that free-minded out-of-the-box thinkers do exist in the United States and Europe. ANDREW EVDOKIMOV

Rostov-on-Don, Russia

■ Stephen F. Cohen's article about the new cold war gives us in Russia a different view of what is going on in American society and the press concerning my country. Dr. Cohen shows a very high level of understanding of problems between the USA and Russia. What I read in US newspapers has very little to do with our everyday reality and the problems we face. We have had enough of revolutions, wars and fear. I want to live in peace with all the neighbors and other nations, including the USA.

DONSKOFF DMITRY

Palo Alto, Calif.

■ As an occasional *Nation* reader and someone who thinks of himself as antiauthoritarian and anticapitalist, I read Stephen F. Cohen's analysis with mounting disbelief. This disbelief turned to incredulity when Cohen mentioned "the Baltics" as part of an "encirclement" of what Cohen wishes the reader to believe is the poor, pitiful Russian Federation, a victim (and only a victim) of the current (and I would agree that it is real) projection of American power into the Eurasian continent. And as someone who spent two weeks in Estonia recently and a full year living in post-Soviet Latvia, I can assure *Nation* readers that the "encirclement" of Russia looks very different in the three Baltic countries, which have been in the not-so-distant past victims themselves of forcible annexation by Russia and the Soviet Union.

DAVID JACOBS

Riga, Latvia

■ Stephen F. Cohen's article probably is *not* a paid propaganda piece, but unfortunately it reads like one and will be so regarded from Finland to Romania, where 100 million people know firsthand what Russia's "legitimate" interests mean to them. GUNARS REINIS

Menlo Park, Calif.

■ Stephen F. Cohen accurately diagnoses US schizophrenia and opportunism toward Russia. "First do no harm" is good advice. However, the root of the problem is the criminalization and complete gutting of the Russian state, which is incapable of ruling effectively within its own borders, let alone expanding its influence worldwide. It is impossible to have normal relations with this freaky, Nigerian-style kleptocracy that is barely in control of a nation too exhausted to develop any civil institutions that could challenge it. THOMAS MCLAUGHLIN

Bethlehem, Pa.

■ Stephen F. Cohen's piece on US/Russia relations was incredibly sobering. As an investor in the Russian stock market but, more important, as an American citizen, I have been deeply troubled by the lack of a rational approach in our dealings with Russia. Russia has been bending over backward to accommodate US policies for fifteen years and never got anything in return but criticism and more demands. Russia's economic decline is over and in its ascendance will not tolerate US duplicity and double standards any longer. ROBERT VALASTIAK

Moscow

■ The author shows ultimate knowledge of Russian reality, and reveals himself as a man of honor. I used to hate America entirely, but now I do not know what to think. Now I realize that the nation shouldn't be blamed for the crimes of its government. I'm 24 and all my life I lived in Russia. I'm Russian and very proud of it. I hope that because of the author our relationship will become a little bit warmer. The author softens the situation a bit. Yeltsin was really hated by 99 percent of Russians. Unfortunately, most Americans do not really understand how deep and serious the problem is. Now every American is an enemy in the opinion of simple Russian people—mostly people are not fond of Putin now just because of his soft policy about the States. And they are not to be blamed for that. Our people have an interesting feature—the ability to analyze. Otherwise we would have been already ruined. And the result of this analysis is the following: America is a liar and enemy. I'm sorry for these

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EDITORIALS

The Fractured Mideast

More than two weeks after Israel launched its countermilitary offensive against Lebanon, the Bush Administration continues to refuse to call for a cease-fire or to take other actions to rein in Israel's disproportionate response to Hezbollah's attack across its northern border. That attack, in which three Israeli soldiers were killed and two captured, was a clear violation of international law. But it was not grounds for an act of war. The US position is not only morally wrong; it thwarts the goal of securing stable and lasting peace in the region, upon which American interests and Israeli security depend.

Washington's tacit blessing of the Israeli military operations, along with its expedited resupply of Israeli munitions, means that the United States will be complicit in the death and displacement of Lebanese civilians beyond the 400 already dead and at least 600,000 displaced, as well as in added destruction of Lebanon's infrastructure and the deepening of a humanitarian crisis. In short, Washington will be implicated in what UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour has called possible war crimes, which will breed more hatred for the United States and Israel throughout the Islamic world. Adding to the sense of impunity were the deaths of four UN observers by an Israeli precision-guided missile, despite what the UN said were repeated Israeli assurances that UN posts were not being targeted.

Ostensibly, White House strategy is to buy time for the Israeli military to degrade Hezbollah's capabilities while Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice builds international support for strengthening Lebanon's government and putting pressure on Syria to stop supporting Hezbollah. The overall goal is to break Hezbollah, the Administration has suggested, so that the Lebanese government can control all of Lebanon, disarming what remains of Hezbollah and securing a peaceful border with the help of international forces. But supporting Israel's military offensive makes no sense. The Israeli attacks are weakening the Lebanese government and increasing Hezbollah's popularity. Rather than breaking Hezbollah's will, the attacks will likely break the Lebanese government and society, creating another failed state and giving militias more freedom to operate.

Washington also says it wants Syria to end its support for Hezbollah, but it refuses to talk directly to Damascus—instead seeking the help of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, who want to stop what they see as a rising Shiite crescent. But the longer Israeli military operations continue, the more vulnerable to popular pressures these governments will become and the less helpful they can be. The leaders of these Sunni states may fear Iranian influence, but their people are more angered by what they see as Israeli aggression. Syria has indicated it is open to talking, but the idea that Basher al-Assad will be moved by Sunni Arab entreaties to split with Iran without major concessions from Washington and Tel Aviv misreads political realities.

Disarming Hezbollah, moving Syria away from Iran and creating a stronger Lebanese state are all worthy goals. But they cannot be achieved by the Bush Administration's limited notion of diplomacy and certainly not without addressing the underlying concerns of the Palestinian and Lebanese people as well as talking with Iran and Syria. Secretary of State Rice is right about one thing: We do need to address the roots of the current crisis. But the roots are not Hezbollah per se, or Syria's or Iran's support for it; as Rashid Khalidi argues in this issue, they can be found in Israel's nearly forty-year occupation of Arab and Palestinian lands. The Israeli strategy of avoiding negotiations aimed at resolving the conflict while seeking to impose its will by force has only radicalized many Palestinians and Lebanese and added to the strength and popularity of Hamas and Hezbollah.

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As the latest violence should make clear, Israeli and US policies seeking to isolate Hamas and Hezbollah, treating them as terrorist organizations and denying them the opportunity to govern, have clearly failed. And so will the current effort of Israel to defeat them militarily. If the Bush Administration really wants a lasting peace, it will put aside the terrorist rhetoric and try diplomacy to resolve the underlying grievances. The first steps are an immediate cease-fire and the exchange of prisoners, followed by multitrack negotiations that will end with the recognition of Israel and the withdrawal of Israel from occupied Arab territory. It will not be quick or easy, but it is the only way to break the escalating violence and hatred that could eventually engulf the entire Middle East.

COMMENT

Anger in the Arab World

In what passes for analysis of the war involving Israel, Lebanon and Palestine in US and Israeli government circles, in the well-oiled PR machine that shills for them, and in much of the US media, we are told about a struggle against terrorism by a state under siege. The basic argument is that Israel is "responding to terrorist violence," and that the only real question is, How soon will Israeli force, backed by American determination, prevail? But this scenario has little to do with reality in the Middle East.

There will be no "destruction" of Hezbollah, and no "uprooting" of its infrastructure or that of Hamas, whatever the results of Israel's siege of Gaza and its merciless attacks against Lebanon. The rhetoric about "terrorism" has mesmerized those who parrot it, blinding them to the fact that Hezbollah and Hamas are deeply rooted popular movements that have developed as a response to occupation—of the West Bank and Gaza for nearly forty years, and of southern Lebanon from 1978 to 2000. Whatever one might say about the two movements' callousness in targeting civilians (a subject on which Israel's defenders are hardly in a position to preach), both have won impressive victories in elections and have provided social services and protection to their people.

The Lebanese government will not do Israel's bidding in south Lebanon. The deep divisions in Lebanon over Hezbollah's military presence before Israel's blitz began are rapidly disappearing. Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, Lebanese Speaker Nabih Berri, Saad Hariri (son of assassinated Prime Minister Rafik Hariri), Gen. Michel Aoun, President Émile Lahoud and other major leaders of the country of all sects and all political persuasions and Lebanese public opinion have been horrified at Israel's ravaging of their country's infrastructure and its defenseless civilian population, yet again. Few indeed will be the Lebanese voices to support the Israeli-US position as this savaging of Lebanon goes on—and just because it is largely absent from US television does not mean that it is invisible to the rest of the world.

Iran and Syria, Hezbollah's principal allies, will not come out of this conflict weaker, even if it develops into a regional war involving either. The United States has been threatening both for several years, since 9/11 released the cowboy in George W. Bush.

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COMMENT

Their positions have been strengthened by the bulldozer-like obtuseness of US policy on Hamas and Hezbollah, never more so than since Israel fell into Hezbollah's trap and overreacted to the capture of two of its soldiers and the wounding of several of its civilians in mid-July. A war with either of these countries, or a serious effort to overthrow either of their unsavory regimes, will in the end weaken either Israel or the United States or both, should they escalate this dangerous international crisis.

The pro-American Arab regimes that initially foolishly aligned themselves with the United States and Israel over the Lebanese crisis have shown their regret by backpedaling as fast as they can. Public opinion in their countries is massively against their position (Al Jazeera's viewership is way up; that of the Saudi-run Al Arabiya is way down) and is making itself felt. Fortunately for the Bush Administration and Israel, none of these countries have a functioning democracy. The net result of this crisis, however it comes out, will be a further weakening of these regimes. They may temporarily increase their dependence on the United States. But they are weaker than they were before this crisis began, and their oppositions, whether in Cairo, Amman or Riyadh, are stronger.

Israel's regional power decreases when it escalates the use of force against Palestinians and Lebanese. This has been the case for the last couple of decades—the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the first intifada of 1987–90 and Hezbollah's defeat of Israel in south Lebanon in the years leading up to 2000 are all examples—and it will happen again. The United States has discovered the same thing (at least the majority of the population in the reality-based community, not in the never-never land of the crazies who run our Middle East policy), as the use of massive force in Iraq has produced a similarly massive weakening of the US position throughout the Middle East. The United States has experienced a decline in its power and influence in the region unparalleled in the post–World War II era.

Much depends on whether an Israeli, American or Israeli-American war with Syria and, much more serious, Iran can be avoided. If escalation of what is already a major war in Gaza and Lebanon can be prevented, the conflict's regional effects will be mitigated. Much depends on how fast European public opinion, turning rapidly, expresses its revulsion at what is happening in Lebanon. Tales of the massive destruction and civilian casualties are being carried home by tens of thousands of French, British, Italian and German evacuees, many of them dual nationals, appearing on French and British TV talking about the atrocities they have seen. Much also depends on how adventurous Iran and Syria choose to be, how much punishment Hezbollah can take and still keep fighting, and how wise the Palestinians are in dealing with their difficult internal situation. And much depends on how far the man in the White House will go with his instincts. If he reins in his darker impulses and those of the Israeli general staff, which is running the show on that end of the alliance, the current slide into the abyss can yet be halted. If not, the Middle East and the United States are headed for catastrophe. RASHID KHALIDI

Rashid Khalidi, Edward Said Professor of Arab Studies at Columbia, is author of the forthcoming The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood.

The View From Israel

Tel Aviv

The current bloody situation in Lebanon and northern Israel did not begin with the July 12 Hezbollah attack across the border; it began with Israeli indifference to the need to stabilize the situation there after the withdrawal of its troops in 2000. Today, with Israel's new and inexperienced civilian leadership having quickly acceded to the military's request for the use of overwhelming force, the only hope for an end to the bloodshed and devastation is action on the part of the international players who until now have avoided any serious commitment to regional peace and stability.

When Prime Minister Ehud Barak fulfilled his campaign promise to withdraw all Israeli troops from Lebanese soil in May 2000, the United Nations declared that the eighteen-year Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon was over. In 2004 the Security Council passed Resolution 1559 calling for the disarmament of Hezbollah units in southern Lebanon, the one piece of unfinished business that threatened to destabilize the international border. Maj. Gen. Giora Eiland, head of Israel's National Security Council, presented a program to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that could have resolved all outstanding issues between Israel and Lebanon, but Sharon preferred not to deal with the Lebanese time bomb.

The current conflict began with two IDF operational failures. On June 25 a Palestinian Hamas unit attacked a military outpost on the Israeli side of the Gaza border, killing two Israeli soldiers and capturing one. On July 12 a Hezbollah unit crossed the northern border and killed three Israeli soldiers while capturing two others. If the IDF had prevented those two attacks, the entire bloody sequence of events we have witnessed during the past few weeks might have been averted. Of course, if Hamas and Hezbollah hadn't carried out the attacks across the internationally recognized borders that everyone wants Israel to withdraw to, we wouldn't be facing the current, horrifying circumstances, with all the civilian victims on both sides.

Ehud Olmert became prime minister with one declared goal on his political agenda: carrying out a unilateral withdrawal from most of the West Bank to preserve Israel's Jewish and

CHARLES BRAGG

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COMMENT

democratic character and to insure that the younger generation would have a peaceful country that would be "fun to live in." The primary agenda of Defense Minister and Labor Party leader Amir Peretz was to change Israel's social and economic priorities and to reduce the gap between rich and poor. Neither wanted or planned to face this type of security crisis, and they essentially gave in to the military leadership's insistence that severe reprisals be ordered to teach Hamas and Hezbollah a lesson, and to change the regional strategic reality. One Israeli commentator called this a "quiet putsch."

The military operation has the backing of the overwhelming majority of the Israeli people, including most of the mainstream peace movement, as missiles rain down daily on the north and many in the area have been forced to live in shelters or relocate. Even the opposition left-wing Meretz Party declared that "Israel has the right to act, in a way which expresses the values of the state, against anyone who attacks its sovereignty," while voicing opposition to "disproportionate damage against civilian concentrations and infrastructures in Gaza and Lebanon." On July 23 5,000 Israeli Jews and Arabs gathered in Tel Aviv for the first major antiwar rally, organized by activist elements within the peace movement, the leadership of the three Arab parties in the Knesset and left-wing Zionists such as former Meretz leader Shulamit Aloni. As voices began to be raised within the Israeli public criticizing the massive use of firepower and the growing number of civilian casualties, the primary call at the rally was for an immediate cease-fire and a return to negotiations.

Two themes underline the current crisis. One is the tendency of the military mind to set policy, both in Israel and in militant Islamic organizations, and the other is the danger of fundamentalism. Islamic fundamentalism, which views the Middle East as a region for Muslims only, threatens to convert the Israeli-Arab conflict into a religious one, with no room for compromise. Jewish fundamentalism, which views the victory in 1967 as miraculous, a first step in some preordained march to salvation, is the driving force behind the post-1967 settlement project in the West Bank, a major obstacle to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. And Christian fundamentalism is one of the underpinnings of George W. Bush's political power and simplistic view of the world, which divides everything and everyone into good and evil, with no apparent room for the subtleties of nonviolent conflict resolution or compromise.

What we need today is an internationally brokered cease-fire, accompanied by political steps to stabilize the situation, which will include the deployment of a credible international force on the Israeli-Lebanese border and the mutual release of prisoners. Then we can return to dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian issue, based upon the vision of a two-state solution.

HILLEL SCHENKER

Hillel Schenker, co-editor of the Jerusalem-based Palestine-Israel Journal, *is a veteran commentator on Israeli-Arab affairs.*

THE MIDEAST ON THE WEB: To some observers, the attacks that detonated Israel's assault on Lebanon look like a death wish—but it's almost impossible to defeat someone who has no fear of death. *Nation* literary editor Adam Shatz explores the roots of the current crisis and the motives of Hezbollah's Sheik Sayed Hassan Nasrallah. *Nation* bloggers comment on the situation and offer information on how to assist relief groups in Lebanon (www.thenation.com).

CALVIN TRILLIN

READING LESS BAD NEWS FROM IRAQ

At last we're reading less about Iraq's woes
And how the chaos there still moves apace.
With all the other Middle Eastern killing,
The papers simply cannot find the space.

His war, said Bush, would shake up this whole region
And—presto!—would democratize the place.
It's shook enough to bury his debacle.
The papers simply cannot find the space.

Not only Hezbollah's Iran's close client.
Iraq is moving toward Iran's embrace.
But now this isn't carried on front pages.
The papers simply cannot find the space.

Our enemies grow stronger in the region—
Yes, stronger than when we began to chase
This cockamamie vision. That's not headlined.
The papers simply cannot find the space.

The bombings in Iraq are even worse now.
And people disappear without a trace.
This sort of thing, though, isn't making headlines.
The papers simply cannot find the space.

Mumbai's Casualties

Islamabad

The Indian city of Mumbai is still rocking from serial metro bombings that, on July 11, left 182 people dead and 900 injured. The slaughter is on a par with the 2004 Madrid train attacks. It is considerably worse than the London bombings, whose first anniversary was observed July 7. Nor were the dead and the lame the only casualties.

On July 15 India told Pakistan that a meeting scheduled for later in the month between their foreign secretaries had been

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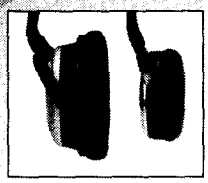

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shelved. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said those who carried out the Mumbai bombings were "instigated, inspired and supported by elements across the border without which they could not act with such devastating effect." Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf denied the charge, while offering his country's "help" in any Indian investigation into the bombers. He also said it would be a "sign of defeat" if "such terrorist acts [were] to undermine the historic opportunity of a lasting peace between Pakistan and India." Other officials in Islamabad said India was exploiting the carnage of Mumbai to evade "the issue" at the core of the conflict with Pakistan.

The spat represents the most serious breach in the Indian-Pakistani peace process since it began in 2004. But it also underscores the mutual dissatisfaction that has always bound it. When Singh talks of "elements across the border," he means jihadi groups harbored in Pakistan, sponsored, allegedly, by its Inter-Service Intelligence force (ISI). And when Pakistani officials refer to "the issue," they mean the divided territory of Kashmir—cause of two of the three Indo-Pakistani wars and the epicenter, for the past sixteen years, of a nationalist-Islamist insurgency against Indian rule that has cost at least 40,000 lives. Both accusations sting because both, in part, are true.

In the past two years, India has promoted increased trade, maintained a cease-fire and enabled some people-to-people contact between the two halves of Kashmir. But it has done little to relax a military regime characterized, according to a recent Human Rights Watch report, by "arbitrary detention, torture and custodial killings," particularly against the Muslim majority that resides in the Kashmir Valley. Similarly, in 2004 Pakistan vowed to shut down all jihadist military camps on its side of Kashmir. It hasn't done so. Following Pakistan's earthquake last year, it was largely Islamist groups, like Jamaat-ul-Dawa, that shoveled out the survivors. The JUD is a front organization for Lashkar-i-Taiba (LIT), a jihadist group that has long fought in Indian Kashmir. The JUD is on Pakistan's terrorist watch list. India wants it banned, and so does the United States.

There are several reasons why that won't happen, say Pakistani analysts. The first is that India has yet to produce hard evidence connecting the JUD-LIT to Mumbai. Second, as its earthquake relief work attests, the JUD-LIT is far more than a military arm. It runs hospitals and hundreds of schools that provide free education for thousands throughout Pakistan. Finally, with general elections looming in 2007, no Pakistani politician—let alone Musharraf, whose only real constituency is the army—is going to risk alienating powerful Islamist parties like the JUD without some Indian give on Kashmir.

But the main reason is that radical Islam now has an Indian base. In 2001 the government banned the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), "for stirring religious unrest over the United States' 'war on terror'" and for SIMI's alleged Al Qaeda sympathies. Dozens of its supporters have been arrested since the Mumbai blasts. The Indian police say SIMI is a subcontractor for LIT. But several Indian observers are less sure. They say radical Islamist groups like SIMI have drawn their support from local sectarian outrages like the 2002 Gujarat riots, in which 2,000 people, mostly Muslims, were killed by Hindu mobs. They think Mumbai may have been revenge, though no government official would dare make the link. It is so much easier to blame Pakistan, says Indian analyst Swapan Dasgupta, writing in the *Asia Wall Street Journal*. "India has been in a state of denial over evidence that the emerging threat is not from those acting at the behest of controllers in Islamabad but from home-grown militants. The suggestion that Islamist terrorism has developed strong roots in India is one the government in New Delhi does not relish."

On the day before India froze its cautious rapprochement with Pakistan, Allama Hasan Turabi, a Shiite cleric, was killed by a suicide bomber in Karachi, almost certainly dispatched by a Sunni jihadi outfit. His death was certainly another reminder that sectarianism is a bane to Islamabad and New Delhi alike. Severing ties seems an odd way to fight it. GRAHAM USHER

Graham Usher, a writer and journalist based in Islamabad, is the author of Dispatches From Palestine: The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process. *An earlier version of this piece appeared at www.thenation.com.*

Reading the Reed Rout

It's way too early for liberal secularists to start breaking out the bubbly. But two recent Republican primaries—in Deep South states, of all places—have exposed some potentially serious cracks in the party's religious-right foundation. In Alabama and Georgia, national icons of Christian conservatism made high-profile runs for state office against old-school, Chamber of Commerce Republicans. In both cases the religious-right candidates began the race with high popularity ratings. In the end they both got clobbered.

The louder jolt rumbled out of the Peach State on July 18, when former Christian Coalition boy genius Ralph Reed lost the Republican primary for lieutenant governor—a race seen by his admirers as a first step toward the White House—to obscure State Senator Casey Cagle by an emphatic 56-to-44 margin. Reed's once-invincible campaign was continually thrown off track by widening revelations about Reed's lucrative consulting work on behalf of Jack Abramoff's Indian casino clients—namely, the way Reed scored a cool $5.3 million by conning thousands of Christians into joining faux anti-gambling campaigns in Texas, Alabama and Louisiana. But what truly doomed his chances—and split religious-right voters into squabbling camps—were lonely-but-loud voices on the religious right who challenged their fellow believers to hold Reed to account. In *World* magazine, the leading national journal of the evangelical right, editor Marvin Olasky (like Reed, a former Bush adviser) took Reed to task in passionate editorials that stunned many readers. In Georgia, Christian Coalition president Sadie Fields defended her man to the end, but others spoke out in disgust. "It is time for Christians to confront and rebuke Ralph Reed, not make apologies for him," wrote Christian lobbyist Clint Austin, a former Reed adviser, in a letter widely distributed to Georgia Republicans in the final days before the pri-

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mary, when the polls still showed Reed in a dead heat with Cagle.

The Christian right had already suffered an earlier rebuke in June, when Alabama Republicans rebuffed, by a nearly 2-to-1 margin, the effort by Roy Moore, the former "Ten Commandments Judge," to unseat incumbent Governor Bob Riley. The vast majority of Alabamians had cheered Moore's installment of a two-and-a-half-ton granite monument to Old Testament law in the state's judicial building when he was chief justice, and most stood by him when he was removed from office for defying court orders to remove it. But the limitations, and downright scariness, of Moore's theocratic vision became all too apparent when he ran for governor. On election day a big chunk of the Christian right stayed home. Georgia's "foot soldiers" followed suit a few weeks later—enough to make Republican strategists shudder as they look toward November.

BOB MOSER

Bob Moser, a Nation *contributing writer, is the editorial director of The Nation Institute's Investigative Fund.*

BUSH POSTPONES 2008 ELECTION

CITES CONSTITUTIONAL POWER TO PROTECT NATION'S SECURITY

What Did 'Four Years' Mean in 1789?

By Stephen Gillers

WASHINGTON, June 21, 2008. President Bush, citing his authority as Commander in Chief of the armed forces and his inherent constitutional power over foreign affairs, today ordered a postponement of the 2008 presidential election in order "to protect the American people in our war on terror."

In a speech during a surprise visit to Baghdad, where he celebrated the summer solstice with the troops, Mr. Bush told the nation that the election will be "rescheduled as soon as a change in leadership does not create a security threat and not a second later. When the Iraqis stand up, we'll vote."

"Elections are important," the President acknowledged. "I know that. I believe in elections. I'm President because of an election, sort of. But protecting the nation from another 9/11 is more important than holding an election precisely on time."

The President noted that as Commander in Chief he had already approved telephone wiretapping without court warrant, incarcerated alleged "enemy combatants" indefinitely without trial and, in a February 2002 order, now rescinded, had authorized the armed forces to ignore the Geneva Conventions when "consistent with military necessity," so long as everyone was treated "humanely."

"If I can do all that, I can defer an election," the President said. "Look, as between not voting on time and getting locked up without all those Geneva rules and such, which is worse?"

In a Washington press conference following the President's speech, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales laid out the legal basis for his department's conclusion that the President could postpone the election.

"Legally, it's simple," Mr. Gonzales said. "It depends on what the meaning of 'four years' is. The Constitution says the President 'shall hold his office during the term of four years.' It does not say 'only four years' or 'four years and not a day more.' The Framers intended 'four years' to be a preference, not a rigid number. We should not take it literally any more than the words 'hold *his* office' means no woman can be President. A woman is running now.

"Time meant something different in 1789," Mr. Gonzales added. "This was before airline schedules and self-winding watches. People didn't run their lives by the clock. Many Americans didn't have clocks."

In a speech on the Senate floor, Joseph Lieberman (IND-Conn.) supported the President's decision. "While I do not believe we should lightly suspend the exercise of the franchise," he said, "protection of the nation cannot be and must not be a partisan issue. As Americans, we can all agree that security is the most important job of a President. We can have a country without an election, but we cannot have an election without a country. It's as simple as that."

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.), the likely Democratic nominee, had no immediate comment, but her office said she will hold a news conference following the results of early polling. A spokesperson for her campaign, granted anonymity because she was not authorized to speak to the press about anything, said the senator "is absolutely opposed to postponing the election as such, but she is amenable to rescheduling the day designated for the actual vote. There is a difference."

Senator Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), chairman of the Judiciary Committee, said he was "troubled" that he had not been consulted on the President's decision. He vowed to "hold hearings following the day that should have been election day if I am chairman of the committee at that time. Unfortunately, we're backlogged on judicial nominations at the moment, and then there's the summer recess. People have plans and nonrefundable tickets."

At his press conference, Mr. Gonzales denied that the Supreme Court's 2006 rejection of military tribunals meant that the President could not delay an election. That decision, known as *Hamdan*, rested on federal statutes and the Geneva Accords. "*Hamdan* was about trials, not voting," he explained. "Geneva doesn't apply to voting. It's a mistake to confuse the two."

Asked if he expected a court challenge to the President's decision, Mr. Gonzales said he was "resigned to the prospect that some may cynically try to use this for their own political advantage." But he added that he was "confident that if the case reaches the Supreme Court, five Justices will agree with our interpretation of 'four years.'"

Stephen Gillers is a professor at New York University School of Law.

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

The Triumph of Crackpot Realism

The frayed threads anchoring the American government to reality have finally snapped, just at the moment radiologists are reporting that Americans are getting too fat to be X-rayed or shoved into any existing MRI tube. The gamma rays can't get through the blubber, same way actual conditions in the outside world bounce off the impenetrable dome of imbecility sheltering America's political leadership. Twenty-three years after one of America's stupidest Presidents announced Star Wars, Reagan's dream has come true. Behind ramparts guarded by a coalition of liars extending from Rupert Murdoch to the *New York Times*, from Bill O'Reilly to PBS, America is totally shielded from truth.

Here we have a Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, who gazes at the rubble of Lebanon, at 600,000 refugees being strafed with cluster bombs, and squeaks happily that we are witnessing "the birth pangs of a new Middle East."

Here we have a President, George W. Bush, who urges Vladimir Putin to commence in Russia the same "institutional change" that is making Iraq a beacon of freedom and free expression. Not long after Bush extended this ludicrous invitation, the United Nations relayed from Iraq's Ministry of Health the country's real casualty rate, which is now at 100 a day, probably nearer 200.

Iraq's morgues reported receipts of 3,149 bodies in June; more than 14,000 since the beginning of the year. Senior Iraqis in the government confide that break-up of Iraq into Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish enclaves, each protected by its own militias, is now inevitable. Iraq as a viable country has been utterly destroyed, with even vaster carnage coming up over the horizon, and here's the numbskull President touting it as an advertisement for American nation-building at its best and inviting its prime minister to Washington to proclaim Iraq's approaching renaissance, all in sync with the 2006 US election campaigns.

Here we have a Congress that reacts with outrage when America's picked man in Iraq, Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, states the obvious, that Israel's attack is "dangerous" and that the world community is not doing enough to curb Israel's destruction of Lebanon. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi rushes out a statement: "Unless Mr. Maliki disavows his critical comments of Israel and condemns terrorism, it is inappropriate to honor him with a joint meeting of Congress." Another twenty Democrats said Maliki shouldn't be allowed to set foot in the place.

Actually, I'm not so sure Congress is impervious to reality, particularly if reality spells out a threat of withdrawal of support from the Israel lobby in the next electoral cycle. The place is about 98 percent bought and paid for by the lobby. How these transactions play out on the ground was well described by Tom Hayden the other day (www.counterpunch.org/hayden07202006.html) as he explained why he felt it necessary for his political future in Los Angeles to stand, Jane Fonda at his side, next to Israeli gunners shelling Beirut back in 1982.

What we are now witnessing is the simultaneous collapse of two countries, Iraq and Lebanon, as sponsored and encouraged by America's ruling bipartisan coalition and its ideological counselors—ranging from Christian nutballs like Jerry Falwell to secular nutballs like Christopher Hitchens. Wesley Clark says that in late 2001 he visited the Pentagon and was told the planned hit list included Iraq, then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia and Sudan "as part of a five-year campaign plan." Two down, five to go.

The attack on Lebanon was planned in detail at least a year ago. Israel picked the provocation of the Hezbollah capture of two Israeli soldiers July 12, but almost any excuse would have sufficed. In 1982 Israel lied flatly, and said it was responding to shells lobbed over the border, even though there had been none for more than a year.

With Bush and Rice and the policy-makers and intellectual courtiers surrounding them, crackpot realism is the prevailing mode. "Crackpot realism" was the concept defined by the great Texan sociologist C. Wright Mills in 1958 (the year Dwight Eisenhower sent the Marines into Lebanon to bolster local US factotum President Camille Chamoun), when he published *The Causes of World War Three*: "In crackpot realism, a high-flying moral rhetoric is joined with an opportunist crawling among a great scatter of unfocused fears and demands. The expectation of war solves many problems of the crackpot realists...instead of the unknown fear, the anxiety without end, some men of the higher circles prefer the simplification of known catastrophe.... They know of no solutions to the paradoxes of the Middle East and Europe, the Far East and Africa except the landing of Marines.... they prefer the bright, clear problems of war—as they used to be. For they still believe that 'winning' means something, although they never tell us what."

The Israeli elites, so habituated to selling intransigence to their ever-receptive opposite numbers in Washington, are now crackpot realists to the very core. Their generals bellow about dumping twenty rockets on south Beirut for every one landing in Israel and are astounded when people start talking about how exacting reprisals on a civilian population—which is what the onslaught has been all about—is a war crime.

Israel is systematically trying to destroy Lebanon as a functioning social and economic entity, to cleanse the south and reoccupy up to the Litani River. The head of the Industry Association of Lebanon, Charles Arbid, told Agence France Presse on July 24 that Israel's strategy is to destroy the whole chain of manufacturing, from production to distribution. Bridges, airports, roads, trucks, ports have been methodically attacked.

Israel's hack legions here recycle the usual mad nonsense about extirpating the terrorist seed, just as they did in 1982 when Henry Kissinger, the crackpot supreme, announced after the onslaught that he could see "a fresh beginning" emerging from under the rubble. True in a way. What sprouted from under the rubble was Hezbollah. Only crackpot realists think they can suppress that inevitable cycle. ■

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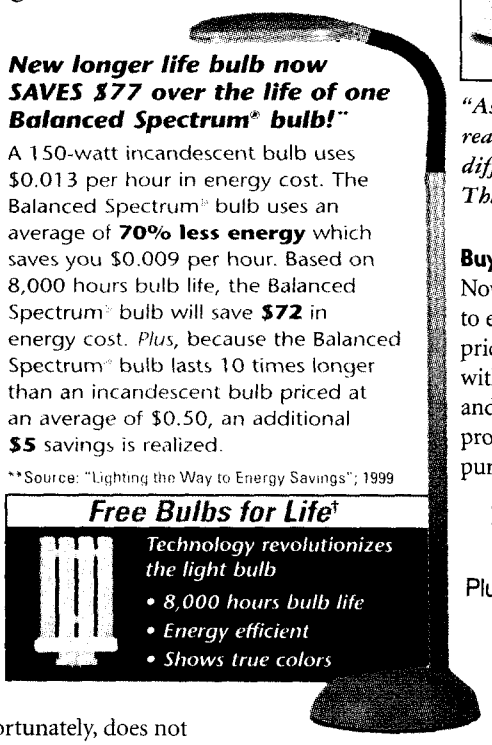

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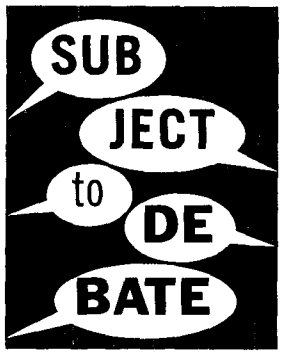

A lot of people—friends, family, even a few readers—congratulated me when I got married this spring. But do you know who was really thrilled? The British government. Steven, my husband, is English, you see, and thanks to his many years of university teaching, he gets a government pension. To my great astonishment, it turns out that when I retire I'll get one too. (Mine will be a girl-sized 60 percent of his.) Leave aside that I am much too young—ahem!—to even think about retiring, and hope never to do so no matter how old I get or how many readers write in to complain.

The point is, merely because I agreed to become Steven's legal wife, the British government is ready to shower me with checks for the rest of my life. This is money that I have done absolutely nothing to earn. Barring a handful of articles in *The London Review of Books* and the *Guardian*, I've made no contribution to the economy of the United Kingdom. I haven't raised British children, run a British household using British consumer products, become a British subject or paid more than a few pence in British taxes. If you think of the traditional wifely economic role as facilitating a husband's employment, I haven't done that either! By the time I met him, Steven was teaching in New York and facilitating himself quite nicely.

No, there is no way to understand my pension except as a big fat wedding present. British taxpayers should be furious that their hard-earned pounds are going to a comfortably self-supporting American. Let her buy her own gin and lime! Our American Social Security system offers a similar, if less generous, gift to aged newlyweds, by the way: I get the equivalent of 50 percent of my husband's Social Security benefits (100 percent should I survive him), but only if I don't get benefits based on my own employment record.

I mention my new pension rights for several reasons. One is to point out the absurdity of the rationale for confining marriage to heterosexual couples. Obviously, the right to marry does not depend on the capacity to procreate or society's interest in creating warm nests for children—Steven and I both procreated with other people, and our children are no longer nestlings. (As for civilizing the raging single man, which George Gilder and others argue is the crucial job of wives, Steven is already the mildest, most civic-minded of men. I'm probably a bad influence!) Marriage may or may not make for a soberer, stabler society, but you get society's wedding presents whether or not your own particular marriage fits the bill. And gay people never get those gifts, even though they too have children—at least a million kids, perhaps as many as 6 million, are currently living in gay families—and can benefit from stable households. Surely they too can use more money when they retire. So far, no one has been able to explain logically why gays should be barred from wedlock and its many privileges.

Don't look for enlightenment from Judge Robert Smith of the New York State Court of Appeals, who wrote the remarkably confused and dithery majority opinion upholding the state's right to ban gay marriage. "Plaintiffs have not persuaded us that this long-accepted restriction is a wholly irrational one, based solely on ignorance and prejudice against homosexuals," he wrote, going on to offer the non sequitur that because the majority of children are born to hetero couples, and because marriage promotes stability, the state was justified in privileging those marriages. Gay "couples can become parents by adoption, or by artificial insemination or other technological marvels, but they do not become parents as a result of accident or impulse. The Legislature could find that unstable relationships between people of the opposite sex present a greater danger that children will be born into or grow up in unstable homes than is the case with same-sex couples, and thus that promoting stability in opposite-sex relationships will help children more." So straights need marriage because they're irresponsible breeders, naturally wild and crazy? And gays can't marry because they think before they procreate? What happened to the old idea that gays shouldn't be allowed to wed because they are promiscuous perverts?

Judge Smith's second reason is that children do better with a mother and a father. "Intuition and experience suggest that a child benefits from having before his or her eyes, every day, living models of what both a man and a woman are like." You'd think gay parents were living in caves on the moon, with no opposite-sex relatives or friends or ex-spouses. Even if the judge was right (though the American Academy of Pediatrics says kids do fine in gay households), gay families are here. The question is whether New York State should be allowed to discriminate against them.

What Judge Smith can't articulate is why letting gays marry would have a bad effect on straights, on kids, on the institution of marriage. That's because it wouldn't have any effect at all. As Chief Justice Judith Kaye dryly noted in her dissent, "There are enough marriage licenses to go around." All this fussing about stability and children is just a smokescreen for a deep emotional, irrational aversion to homosexuality.

The most unfortunate victims of the current marital system aren't even gay couples—after all, they have each other, and in many states civil union and domestic partnerships as well. It's single people. For outmoded historical reasons, our society makes marriage the key to a host of social goods, from health insurance and death benefits to the right to make medical decisions for a loved one—and get a last-minute pension like my own. That system was always inadequate, and today it makes no sense at all. Everybody needs health insurance, not just the spouses and marital children of workers lucky enough to have a job that provides it. Everyone needs a decent old age. Tony Blair should take my pension and bestow it on a single mother, or a never-married woman facing a pinched retirement thanks to the job discrimination that kept her wages low.

I'll be happy to pay for my own gin and lime. ■

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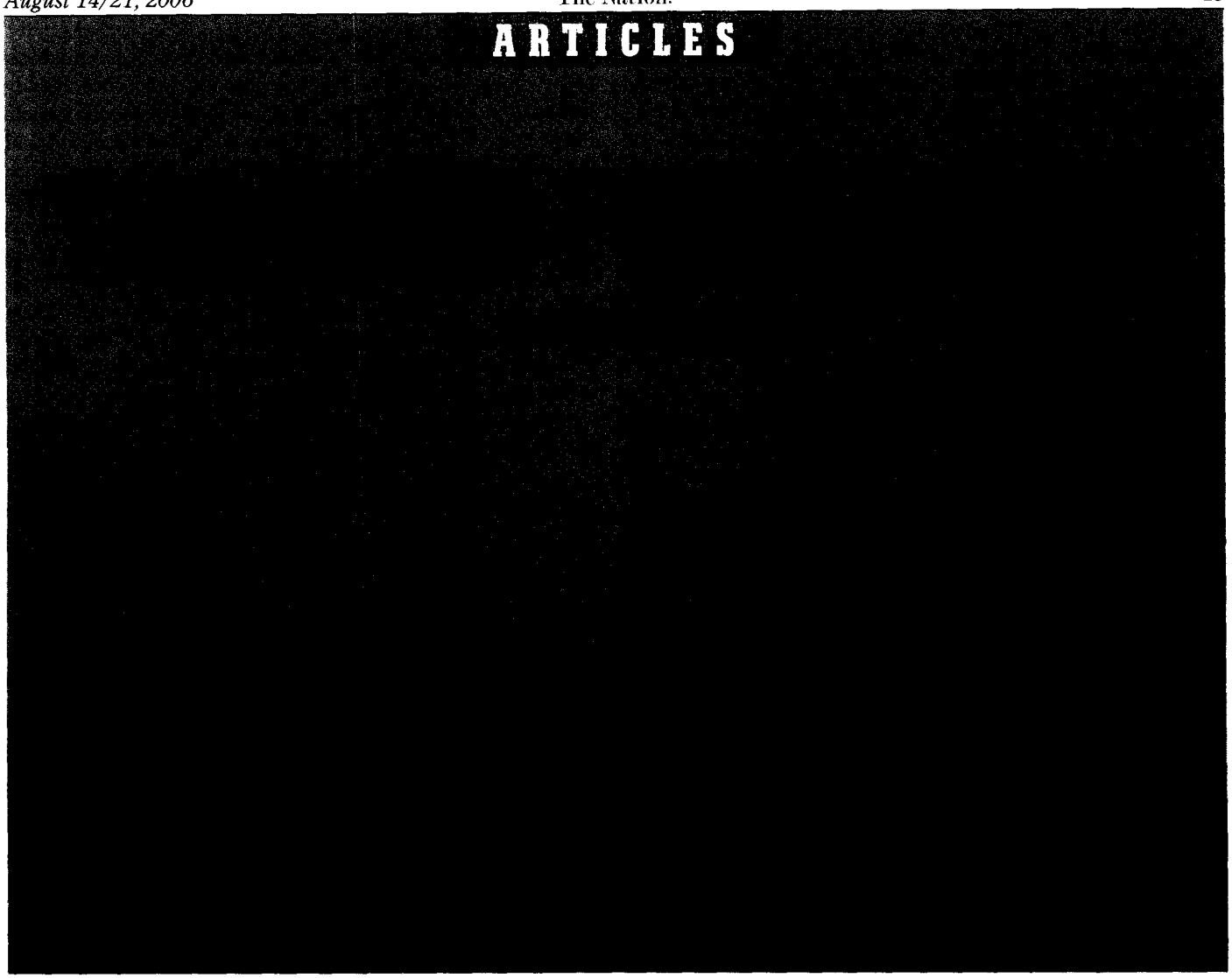

REPETITION

Anyone who wants to write about the constitutional crisis unfolding in the United States today faces a peculiar problem at the outset. There is a large body of observations that at one and the same time have been made too often and yet not often enough—too often because they have been repeated to the point of tedium for a minority ready to listen but not often enough because the general public has yet to consider them seriously enough. The problem for a self-respecting writer is that the act of writing almost in its nature promises something new. Repetition is not really writing but propaganda—not illumination for the mind but a mental beating. Here are some examples of the sort of observations I have in mind, at once over-familiar and unheard:

President George W. Bush sent American troops into Iraq to find weapons of mass destruction, but they weren't there.

He said that Saddam Hussein's regime had given help to Al Qaeda, but it had not.

He therefore took the nation to war on the basis of falsehoods.

His Administration says that the torture at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere has been the work of a few bad apples in the military, whereas in fact abuses were sanctioned at the highest levels of the executive branch in secret memos.

His Administration lambastes leakers, but its own officials illegally leaked the name of a CIA operative, Valerie Plame, in order to politically discredit her husband.

He flatly stated to the public that all wiretaps of Americans were ordered pursuant to court warrants, whereas in fact he was authorizing and repeatedly reauthorizing warrantless wiretaps.

These wiretaps violated a specific law of Congress forbidding them.

His Administration has asserted a right to imprison Americans as well as foreigners indefinitely without the habeas corpus hearings required by law.

Wars of aggression, torture, domestic spying and arbitrary arrest are the hallmarks of dictatorship, yet Congress, run by the President's party, has refused to conduct full investigations into either the false WMD claims, or the abuses and torture, or the warrantless wiretaps, or the imprisonment without habeas corpus.

When Congress passed a bill forbidding torture and the President signed it, he added a "signing statement" implying a right to disregard its provisions when they conflicted with his interpretation of his powers.

The President's secret legal memos justifying the abuses and

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torture are based on a conception of the powers of the executive that gives him carte blanche to disregard specific statutes as well as international law in the exercise of self-granted powers to the Commander in Chief nowhere mentioned in the Constitution.

If accepted, these claims would fundamentally alter the structure of the American government, upsetting the system of checks and balances and nullifying fundamental liberties, including Fourth Amendment guarantees against unreasonable searches and seizures and guarantees of due process. As such, they embody apparent failures of the President to carry out his oath to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

The need to repeat these familiar points, as I have just done (while also begging the indulgence of the reader, as I do), is itself a symptom of the crisis. The same concentration of governmental and other power in the hands of a single party that led to the abuses stands in the way of action to address them. The result is a problem of political sanitation. The garbage heaps up in the public square, visible to all and stinking to high heaven, but no garbage truck arrives to take it away. The lawbreaking is exposed, but no legislative body responds. The damning facts pour out, and protests are made, but little is done. Then comes the urge to repeat.

The dilemma is reflected in microcosm in the news media, especially television—a process particularly on display in the failure to challenge the Administration's deceptive rationale for the Iraq War. The reasons for severe doubt were, at the very least, available before the war, and they were expounded in many places. More truthful, contrary voices could and did speak up, especially on the Internet, the freest of today's media. But they were not widely heard. They were drowned out by the dominant voices in the mainstream, acceding to the deceptions of power and their variations and derivatives. All over the world, autocratic-minded rulers, from Italy's former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi to Russia's President Vladimir Putin, have learned that de facto control of the political content of television is perhaps the most important lever of power in our day. They have learned that it does not matter politically if 15 or even 25 percent of the public is well informed as long the majority remains in the dark. The problem has not been censorship but something very nearly censorship's opposite: the deafening noise of the official megaphone and its echoes—not the suppression of truth, still spoken and heard in a narrow circle, but a profusion of lies and half lies; not too little speech but too much. If you whisper something to your friend in the front row of a rock concert, you have not been censored, but neither will you be heard.

The one major breach in the monopoly has been made by the Supreme Court, especially in its decision in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* requiring application of the Geneva Conventions and the Uniform Code of Military Justice to detainees. The decision's reasoning, if it carries the day in practice, would roll back many of the usurpations by the executive, which has already claimed that it will apply the Geneva Conventions to prisoners in US custody (though there is doubt what this will mean) and will seek a constitutional opinion by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act court on its wiretapping. When the Supreme Court speaks, it is more than repetition. It is effective action.

Yet in the last analysis, the outcome of the contest will be decided in the political arena, where public opinion and, ultimately, voters are the decision-makers. It's notable that the reaction to the Supreme Court's decision in *Hamdan* by one Republican Congressional leader was to accuse Democrats who applauded the decision of wanting "special privileges for terrorists."

One-party monopoly of power is not the only inhibiting factor. Any oppositionist who is honest will keep in mind that a majority, however narrow, of Americans voted that one party into power in a series of elections. Especially important was the presidential election of 2004, when many, though not all, of the abuses were already known. (And then the election itself was subject to grave abuses, especially in Ohio.) The weight and meaning of that majority does not disappear because it was demonstrably misinformed about key matters of war and peace. It's one thing to oppose an illegitimate concentration of power in the name of a repressed majority, another to oppose power backed and legitimated by a majority. In the first case, it will be enough to speak truth to power; in the second, the main need is to speak truth to one's fellow citizens. As the end is restoring democratic process, so the means should be democratic. It's true that since 2004 the President's positive ratings in the polls have plummeted, but there is no guarantee that this shift in opinion will translate into Republican defeats in the forthcoming Congressional election, and a renewal of Republican majorities in both houses of Congress would add another stamp of approval to the Bush policies, however misguided.

The mechanisms inhibiting opposition to state power, especially when backed by electoral majorities, are not something new. Even in the freest countries there is at all times a conventional wisdom, which may wander more or less far from reality. Sometimes it strays into a fantasyland. Then marginal voices (which of course are not correct merely because they are marginal) have a special responsibility to speak up, and sometimes they shift the mainstream—as happened, for instance, in the 1960s regarding the Vietnam War and legal segregation. For the better part of a century, segregation fit squarely within the banks of the American mainstream. Then it didn't.

As the mere mention of Vietnam suggests, the repetition dilemma also has causes that go deeper into the past. I embarked on journalism in 1966 as a reporter in Vietnam. The experience led, naturally and seamlessly, to a decade of writing about the war, the opposition to the war and, finally, when the war "came home," to the constitutional crisis of the Nixon years and its resolution via Nixon's resignation under threat of impeachment. The war and the impeachment were connected at every point. It wasn't just that Nixon's wiretapping was directed against Daniel Ellsberg, war critic and leaker

Jonathan Schell, The Nation*'s peace and disarmament correspondent, is a senior fellow at The Nation Institute and the author of* The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People.

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Professor Timothy Taylor is Managing Editor of the *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* a quarterly academic journal produced at Macalester College and published by the American Economic Association. He received a master's degree in economics from Stanford University. At Minnesota, he was Teacher of the Year for Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs master's degree students.

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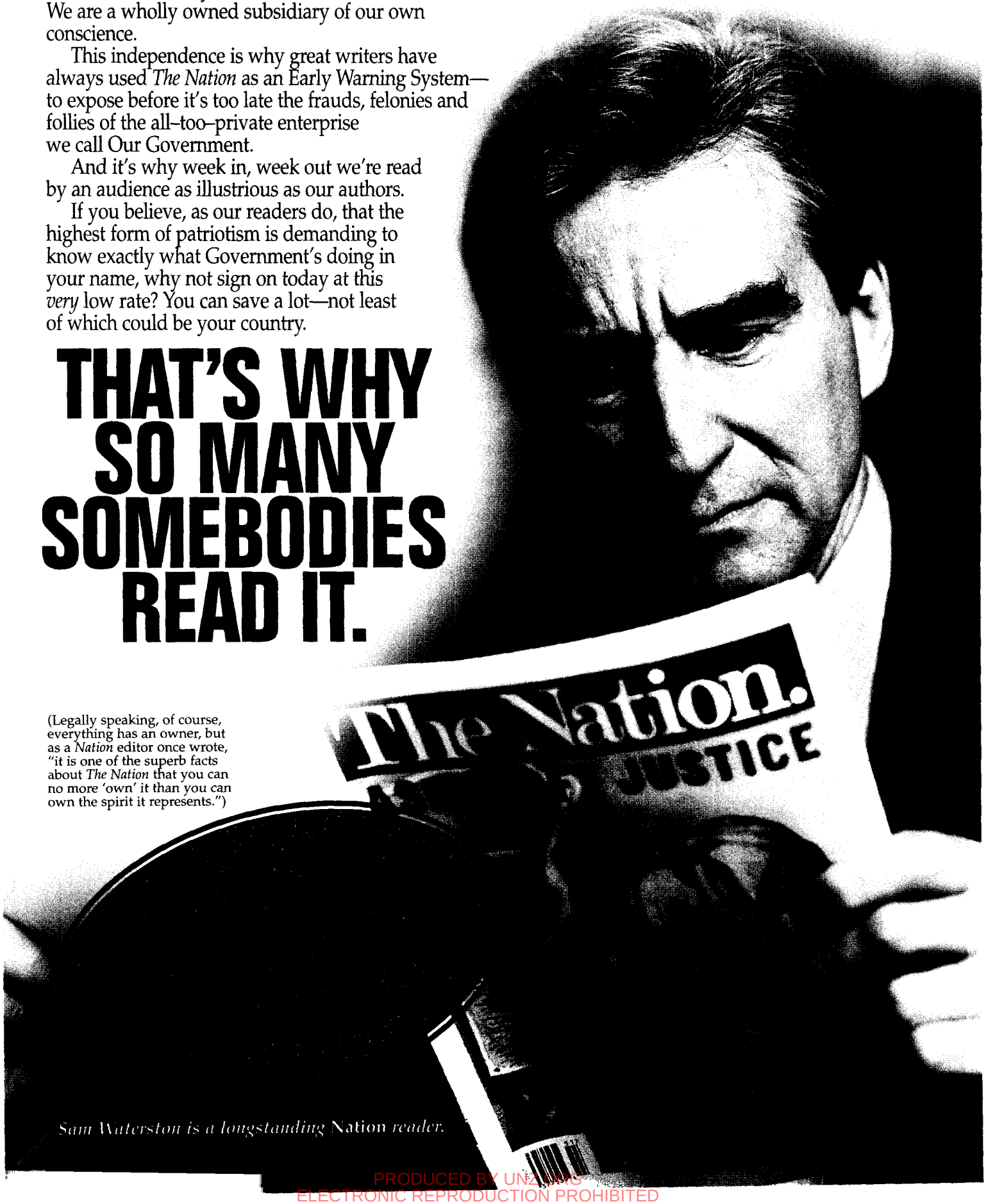

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Sam Waterston is a longstanding Nation *reader.*

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of the Vietnam-era Pentagon Papers; or that the "plumbers" outfit that carried out the Watergate break-in was founded to spy on, disrupt and attack war critics; or that Nixon's persistence in trying to win the war even as he withdrew American troops from it drove him into the paranoia that led him to draw up an "enemies list" and sponsor subversions of the electoral process—it was that his entire go-it-alone, imperial conception of the presidency originated in his pursuit of his war policy in secrecy and without Congressional involvement.

And now, thirty years later, we find ourselves facing an uncannily similar combination of misconceived war abroad and constitutional crisis at home. Again a global crusade (then it was the cold war, now it is the "war on terror") has given birth to a disastrous war (then Vietnam, now Iraq); again a President has responded by breaking the law; and again it falls to citizens, journalists, judges, justices and others to trace the connections between the overreaching abroad and the overreaching at home. In consequence, not only are we condemned to repeat ourselves for the duration of the current crisis but a remarkable number of those repetitions are already repetitions of what was said thirty years ago.

Consider, for instance, the following passage from a speech called "The Price of Empire," by the great dissenter against the Vietnam War Senator William Fulbright.

> Before the Second World War our world role was a potential role; we were important in the world for what we could do with our power, for the leadership we might provide, for the example we might set. Now the choices are almost gone: we are almost the world's self-appointed policeman; we are almost the world defender of the status quo. We are well on our way to becoming a traditional great power—an imperial nation if you will—engaged in the exercise of power for its own sake, exercising it to the limit of our capacity and beyond, filling every vacuum and extending the American "presence" to the farthest reaches of the earth. And, as with the great empires of the past, as the power grows, it is becoming an end in itself, separated except by ritual incantation from its initial motives, governed, it would seem, by its own mystique, power without philosophy or purpose. That describes what we have almost become....

Is there a single word—with the possible exception of "almost" at the end of the paragraph—that fails to apply to the country's situation today? Or consider this passage from Fulbright's *The Arrogance of Power* with the Iraq venture in mind:

> Traditional rulers, institutions, and ways of life have crumbled under the fatal impact of American wealth and power but they have not been replaced by new institutions and new ways of life, nor has their breakdown ushered in an era of democracy and development.

Recalling these and other passages from Fulbright and other critics of the Vietnam era, one is again tempted to wonder why we should bother to say once more what has already been said so well so many times before. Perhaps we should just quote rather than repeat—cite, not write.

Of course, people like to point out that Iraq is not Vietnam. They are right insofar as those two countries are concerned. For instance, today's anarchic Iraq, a formerly unified country now on or over the edge of civil war, is wholly different from yesterday's resolute Vietnam, divided into north and south but implacably bent on unity and independence from foreign rule. And of course the two eras could scarcely be more different. Most important, the collapse of the Soviet Union has effectuated a full-scale revolution in the international order. The number of the world's superpowers has been cut back from two to one, China has become an economic powerhouse, market economics have spread across the planet, the industrial age has been pushed aside by the information age, global warming has commenced and rock music has been replaced by rap. Yet in the face of all this, American policies have shown an astonishing sameness, and this is what is disturbing. In our world of racing change, only the pathologies of American power seem to remain constant. Why?

Perhaps a clue can be found in the famous speech that Senator Joseph McCarthy gave in Wheeling, West Virginia, in February 1950. This was the occasion on which he announced his specious list of Communists in the State Department, launching what soon was called McCarthyism. He also shared some thoughts on America's place in the world. The allied victory in World War II had occurred only five years before. No nation approached the United States in wealth, power or global influence. Yet McCarthy's words were a dirge for lost American greatness. He said, "At war's end we were physically the strongest nation on earth and, at least potentially, the most powerful intellectually and morally. Ours could have been the honor of being a beacon in the desert of destruction, a shining living proof that civilization was not yet ready to destroy itself. Unfortunately, we have failed miserably and tragically to arise to the opportunity." On the contrary, McCarthy strikingly added, "we find ourselves in a position of impotency."

By what actions had the United States thrown away greatness? McCarthy blamed not mighty forces without but traitors within, to whom he assigned an almost magical power to sap the strength of the country. America's putative decline occurred "not because our only powerful potential enemy has sent men to invade our shores, but rather because of the traitorous actions of those who have been treated so well by this nation." And, he raved on in a later speech, "we believe that men high in this Government are concerting to deliver us to disaster. This must be the product of a great conspiracy, a conspiracy on a scale so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man. A conspiracy of infamy so black that, when it is finally exposed, its principals shall be forever deserving of the maledictions of all honest men."

McCarthy seemed to look at the United States through a kind of double lens. At one moment the nation was a colossus, all-powerful, without peer or rival; at the next moment a midget, cringing in panic, delivered over to its enemies, "impotent." Like the genie in Aladdin's bottle, the United States seemed to be a kind of magical being, first filling the sky, able to grant any wish, but a second later stoppered and helpless in

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its container. Which it was to be depended not on any enemy, all of whom could easily be laid low if only America so chose, but on Americans at home, who prevented this unleashing of might. If Americans cowered, it supposedly was mainly before other Americans. Get them out of the way, and the United States could rule the globe. The right-wing intellectual James Burnham named the destination to which this kind of thinking led. "The reality," he wrote, "is that the only alternative to the communist World Empire is an American Empire, which will be, if not literally worldwide in formal boundaries, capable of exercising decisive world control."

McCarthy's double vision of the United States must have resonated deeply, for it turned out to have remarkable staying power. Consider, for example, the following statement by the super-hawkish columnist Charles Krauthammer, penned fifty-one years later, in March 2001 (six months before September 11). Again we hear the King Kong–like chest-beating, even louder than before. For the end of the cold war, Krauthammer wrote, had made the United States "the dominant power in the world, more dominant than any since Rome." And so, just as McCarthy claimed in 1950, "America is in a position to reshape norms, alter expectations and create new realities." But again there is a problem. And it is the same one—the enemies within. Thus again comes the cry of frustration, the anxiety that this utopia, to be had for the taking, will melt away like a dream, that the genie will be stuffed back into its bottle. For the "challenge to unipolarity is not from the outside but from the inside. The choice is ours. To impiously paraphrase Benjamin Franklin: History has given you an empire, if you will keep it." The remedy? "Unapologetic and implacable demonstrations of will."

We find expressions of the same double vision—a kind of anxiety-ridden triumphalism—again and again in iconic phrases uttered in the half-century between McCarthy and Krauthammer. Walt Rostow, chair of the State Department's Policy Planning Council, articulated a version of it in 1964, on the verge of the Johnson Administration's escalation of the Vietnam War, when he spoke in a memo to Secretary of State Dean Rusk of "the real margin of influence...which flows from the simple fact that at this stage of history, we are the greatest power in the world—if only we behave like it." Madeleine Albright, then UN ambassador, gave voice to a similar frustration when she turned to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell and asked, "What's the point of having this superb military you are always talking about if we can't use it?" But it was Richard Nixon who gave the double vision its quintessential expression when, in 1970, at the pinnacle of America's involvement in Vietnam, he stated, "If, when the chips are down, the world's most powerful nation, the United States of America, acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world." For Nixon, as for McCarthy and Krauthammer, the principal danger was on the home front. As he said on another occasion, "It is not our power but our will and character that is being tested tonight. The question all Americans must ask and answer tonight is this: Does the richest and strongest nation in the history of the world have the character to meet a direct challenge by a group which rejects every effort to win a just peace?" And, even more explicitly, "Because let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that."

The question is how the United States could be a "giant" yet pitiful and helpless, the "richest and strongest" yet unable to have its way, in possession of the most superb military force in history yet unable to use it, the "greatest power the world had ever known" yet at the same time paralyzed. Why, if the United States has had no peer in wealth and weaponry, has it for more than a half-century been persistently, incurably complaining of weakness, paralysis, even impotence?

McCarthy, of course, presented the "loss" of China as Exhibit A in his display of the deeds of his gallery of traitors. For example, in the Wheeling speech, he specifically mentioned John Service, of the State Department's China desk, and charged that he "sent official reports back to the State Department urging that we torpedo our ally Chiang Kai-shek and stating, in effect, that communism was the best hope of China." By such false accusations—including the spurious allegation about the Communists in the State Department—did McCarthy transpose the "lost" war in China to the domestic sphere, where the phantom saboteurs of American global hegemony were supposedly at work. Soon, the Communist tactic of the purge was adopted by the American government, with the result that many of those most knowledgeable about Asia, such as Service, were driven out of government.

As has often been pointed out, whether the United States "lost China" depends on whether you think the United States ever had it. The question has lasting importance because the alleged loss of one country or another—China, Laos, Vietnam, Chile, Iran, Nicaragua, Iraq—became a leitmotif of American politics, especially at election time. In each of these cases, the United States "possessed" the countries in question (and thus was in a position to "lose" them) only insofar as it somehow laid claim to control the destinies of peoples on a global basis, or, as Fulbright said, an imperial basis. But if there is one clear lesson that the history of recent empires has taught, it is that modern peoples have both the will and the capacity to reject imperial rule and assert control over their own destinies. Less interested in the contest between East and West than in running their own countries, they yearned for self-determination, and they achieved it. The British and French imperialists were forced to learn this lesson over the course of a century. The Soviet Union took a little longer, and itself collapsed in the process. The United States, determined in the period in question to act in an imperial fashion, has been the dunce in the class, and indeed under the current Administration has put forward imperial claims that dwarf those of imperial Britain at its height. It is only because, in country after country, the United States has attempted the impossible abroad that it has been led to blame people at home for the failure.

Fortunately, American involvement in China in the 1940s was restricted to aid and advice, and virtually no fighting between Americans and Mao's forces occurred. Now that the price of the military intervention in Vietnam—a much smaller country—is known, we can only shudder to imagine what intervention in China would have cost. Perhaps one of the few positive things

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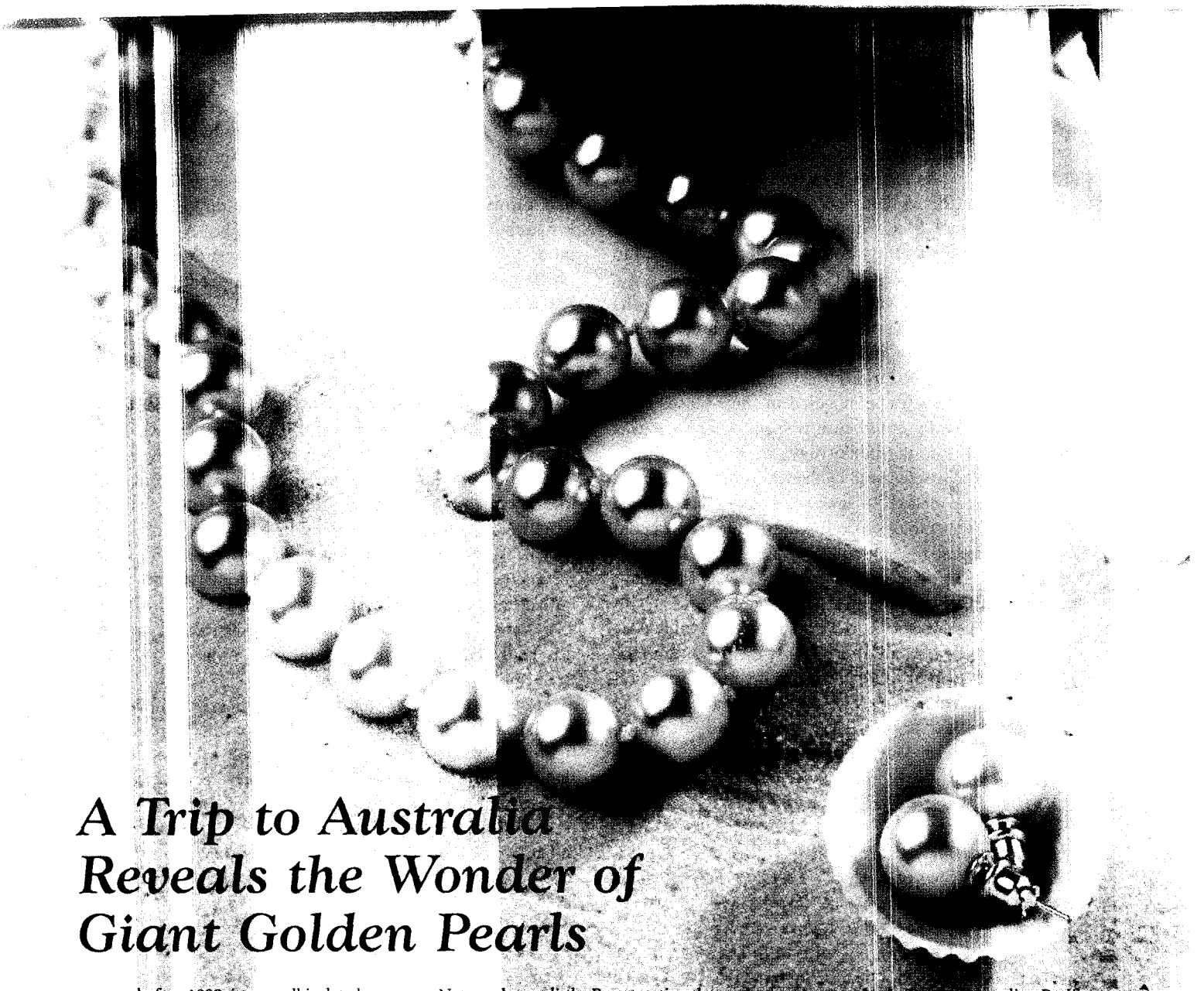

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that can be said about the Vietnam disaster is that if the United States was determined to fight a counterinsurgency war, it was better to do it in Vietnam than in China. But even without intervention, the price of China's defection from the American camp was high. The causes of McCarthyism were manifold, but in a very real sense, what the country got instead of war with Mao was the "war" at home that was McCarthyism.

The true causes of the Nationalist government's fall—its own incompetence and corruption, leading to wholesale loss of legitimacy in the eyes of its own people—were expunged from consciousness, and the lurid fantasy of State Department traitors and conspirators was concocted in their place. Then the delusion that Chiang could return from what then was called the island of Formosa (the Portuguese name for Taiwan) to retake the mainland was fostered by the China lobby. Delusion ran wild. Myths were created to take the place of unfaceable truths. The internal conspiracy to destroy the United States, said McCarthy, was supposedly headed by, of all people, Truman's Secretary of State, Gen. George Marshall. "It was Marshall, with Acheson and Vincent eagerly assisting," he said, "who created the China policy which, destroying China, robbed us of a great and friendly ally, a buffer against the Soviet imperialism with which we are now at war." And he added for good measure, "We have declined so precipitously in relation to the Soviet Union in the last six years. How much swifter may be our fall into disaster with Marshall at the helm?"

Another event, scarcely more than a month before Mao declared the existence of the People's Republic of China, also fueled McCarthy's theme of thrown-away greatness. On August 29, 1949, the Soviet Union tested its first atomic bomb—Joe-1, named after Joseph Stalin. At once, in an experience strangely parallel to the loss of China from America's sphere of interest, intoxicating dreams of atomic monopoly and the lasting military superiority that was thought to go with it shriveled up. Not superiority but stalemate was suddenly the outlook—not dominance but the stasis of the "balance of terror." The outlines of the new limitations soon took shape in the long, wearying, poorly understood and publicly disliked Korean War, in which America's atomic arsenal, whose use was considered but rejected, was no help. The theme of thwarted American greatness was sounded again, when Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who proposed using atomic weapons in Korea, announced, "There can be no substitute for victory," and was fired by Truman for insubordination. Meanwhile, a connection with the enemy within was discovered when Soviet spying on the Manhattan Project came to light. Scientists had long known that there could be no "secret" of the bomb—that the relevant science was irretrievably available to all—and that the Soviet Union would be able to build one. The Soviet timetable had indeed been speeded up by the spying, but now it seemed to McCarthy and others that the domestic traitors were the prime agents of the sudden, apparent reversal of American fortune. (Truman sought to compensate for the loss of the atomic monopoly with his prompt decision to build the H-bomb.)

The full implications of the ensuing nuclear standoff sank in slowly. As the Soviet Union gradually built up its arsenal, American strategic thinkers and policy-makers awakened to some unpleasant discoveries about nuclear arms. The bomb, too, had a distinctly genie-like quality of looking formidable at one instant but useless the next. Even in the days of American nuclear monopoly, between 1945 and the first Soviet explosion of 1949, nuclear weapons had proved a disappointing military instrument. Stalin had simply declared that nuclear weapons were for scaring people with "weak nerves," and acted accordingly. And once the monopoly was broken, no use of nuclear weapons could be planned without facing the prospect of retaliation. During the 1950s Dwight Eisenhower tried to squeeze what benefit he could out of the United States' lingering numerical nuclear superiority with his "massive retaliation" policy, but its prescription of threatening nuclear annihilation to gain advantage in far-flung local struggles was never quite believable, perhaps even by its practitioners. By the late 1950s a new generation of strategists was awakening to the full dimensions of a central paradox of the nuclear age: Possession of nuclear arsenals did not empower but rather paralyzed their owners. Henry Kissinger remarked, "The more powerful the weapons, the greater the reluctance to use them," and fretted about "how our power can give impetus to our policy rather than paralyze it."

Here at the core of the riddle of American power in the nuclear age was the very image of the pitiful, helpless giant, a figure grown weak through the very excess of his strength. But the source of this weakness, which was very real, had nothing to do with any domestic cowards, not to speak of traitors, or any political event; it lay in the revolutionary consequences for all military power of the invention of nuclear arms, even if—with a hint of defensiveness, perhaps—the United States now called itself a "superpower." (The H-bomb was first called "the super.") Here was a barrier to the application of force that no cultivation of "will" could change or overcome. But the policy-makers did not accept the verdict of paralysis without a struggle. Within the precincts of high strategy, the "nuclear priesthood" mounted a sustained, complex intellectual insurrection against this distasteful reality of the nuclear age. Even in the face of the undoubted reality that if the arsenals were used, "mutual assured destruction" would result, they looked for room to maneuver. One line of attack was the "counterforce" strategy of targeting the nuclear forces rather than the society of the foe. The hope was to preserve the possibility of some kind of victory, or at least of relative military advantage, from the general ruin of nuclear war. Another line of attack was advocacy of "limited war," championed by Kissinger and others. The strategists reasoned that although "general war" might be unwinnable, limited war, of the kind just then brewing in Vietnam, could be fought and won. Perhaps not all war between nuclear adversaries had been paralyzed. Thus, the impotent omnipotence of the nuclear stalemate became one more paradoxical argument, in addition to those drummed into the public mind by McCarthy and his heirs, in favor of American engagement in counterinsurgency struggles. And this time the United States, unprotected by the prudence of a George Marshall, did go to war.

The results are the ones we know. American military might was no more profitable when used against rebellious local populations in limited wars than it was in general, nuclear wars.

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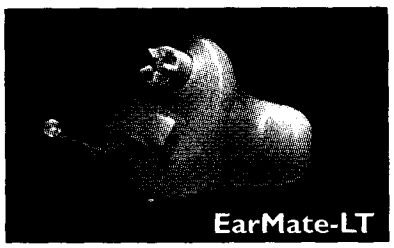

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This time, the lessons were learned, and for a while they stuck: Peoples, even of small countries, are powerful within their own borders; they have the means to resist foreign occupation successfully; military force will not lead them to change their minds; the issues are therefore essentially political, and in this contest, foreign invaders are fatally disadvantaged from the outset; if they are not willing to stay forever, they lose.

By the late 1970s adverse experience sufficient to illuminate the utterly novel historical situation of the United States in the late twentieth century was in hand. Undoubtedly, it had the biggest heap of weapons of any country. Without question, they were the most varied, sophisticated and effective in the world at their job of killing people and blowing things up. The question was what the United States could accomplish with this capacity. Certainly, if a conventional foe lacking nuclear arms arrayed itself in battle against the United States, it could be handily defeated. That was the mistake that Saddam Hussein made in 1990 when he sent his army out into the Kuwaiti desert, where it was pulverized from the air. But few wars in fact conformed to this conventional pattern any longer. Of far greater importance was what happened to two kinds of war that had historically been the most important—wars of imperial conquest and general, great-power wars, such as the First and Second World Wars. During the twentieth century the first kind had become hopeless "quagmires," owing to the aroused will of local peoples everywhere who, collectively, had put an end to the age of imperialism. The second were made unfightable and unwinnable by the nuclear revolution. It was these two limitations on the usefulness of military force, one acting at the base of the international system, the other at its apex, that delimited the superiority of the superpower. (The paradox of impotent omnipotence was even more pronounced for the other superpower, the Soviet Union, which actually disappeared.)

Very possibly, the United States, with all its resources, would have been the sort of globe-straddling empire that Joseph McCarthy wanted it to be had it risen to pre-eminence in an earlier age. It was the peculiar trajectory of the United States, born in opposition to empire, to wind up making its own bid for empire only after the age of imperialism was over. Though it's hard to shed a tear, you might say that there was a certain unfairness in America's timing. All the ingredients of past empires were there—the wealth, the weapons, the power, hard and soft. Only the century was wrong. The United States was not, could not be and cannot now be a new Rome, much less greater than Rome, because it cannot do what Rome did. It cannot, in a postimperial age, conquer other countries and lastingly absorb them into a great empire; it cannot, in the nuclear age, not even today, fight and win wars against its chief global rivals, who still, after all, possess nuclear arsenals. Even tiny, piteous, brutalized, famine-ridden North Korea, more a cult than a country, can deter the United States with its puny putative arsenal. The United States, to be sure, is a great power by any measure, surely the world's greatest, yet that power is hemmed in by obstacles peculiar to our era. The mistake has been not so much to think that the power of the United States is greater than it is as to fail to realize that power itself, whether wielded by the United States or anyone else—if conceived in terms of military force—has been in decline. By imagining otherwise, the United States has become the fool of force—and the fool of history.

In this larger context the repeated constitutional crises of the last half-century assume an altered aspect. The conventional understanding is that an excess of power abroad brings abuses at home. The classic citation is Rome, whose imperial forces, led by Julius Caesar, returning from foreign conquest, crossed the river Rubicon into the homeland and put an end to the republic. (Thus both the proponents of American empire and its detractors can cite Rome.) But that has not been the American story. Rome and would-be Rome are not the same. Empire and the fantasy of empire are not the same. It is rather the repeatedly failed bid for imperial sway that has corrupted. It was not triumph but loss—of China, of the atomic monopoly, among other developments—that precipitated the McCarthyite assault on liberty at home. It was persistent failure in the Vietnam War, already a decade old and deeply unpopular, that led an embattled, isolated, nearly demented Richard Nixon to draw up his enemies list, illegally spy on his domestic opposition, obstruct justice when his misdeeds became known, ramble drunkenly in the Oval Office about using nuclear weapons and ultimately mount an assault on the entire constitutional system of checks and balances. And it is today an unpopular President Bush, unable either to win the Iraq War or to extricate himself from it, who has launched his absolutist assault on the Constitution. Power corrupts, says the old saw. But is power the right word to use in the face of so much failure? The sometimes suggested alternate—that weakness corrupts—seems equally appropriate. In a manner of speaking perhaps both saws are true, for in terms of military might the United States is unrivaled, yet in terms of capacity to get things done with that might, it so often proves weak—even, at times, impotent, as McCarthy said. The pattern is not the old Roman one in which military conquest breeds arrogance and arrogance stokes ambition, which leads to usurpation at home. Rather, in the case of the United States, misunderstanding of its historical moment leads to misbegotten wars; misbegotten wars lead to military disaster; military disaster leads to domestic strife and scapegoating; domestic strife and scapegoating lead to usurpation, which triggers a constitutional crisis. Crises born of strength and success are different from crises born of failure. Fulbright warned of the corruption of imperial ambition and the arrogance of power. But we need also to speak of the corruption of imperial failure, the arrogance of anxiety.

What the true greatness—or true power—of the United States is or can be for the world in our time is an absorbing question in pressing need of an answer. Our very conceptions of greatness and power—military, economic, political, moral—would need searching reconsideration. Those true powers—especially the economic—also have an "imperial" aspect, but that is another debate. An advantage of that debate is that it would be about things that are real. Jettisoning the mirage of military domination of the globe that has addled so many American brains for more than half a century and also shunning the panic-stricken fears of impotence that have accompanied the inevitable frustration of these delusions, the debate would take realistic stock of the nation's very considerable yet limited resources and ask what is

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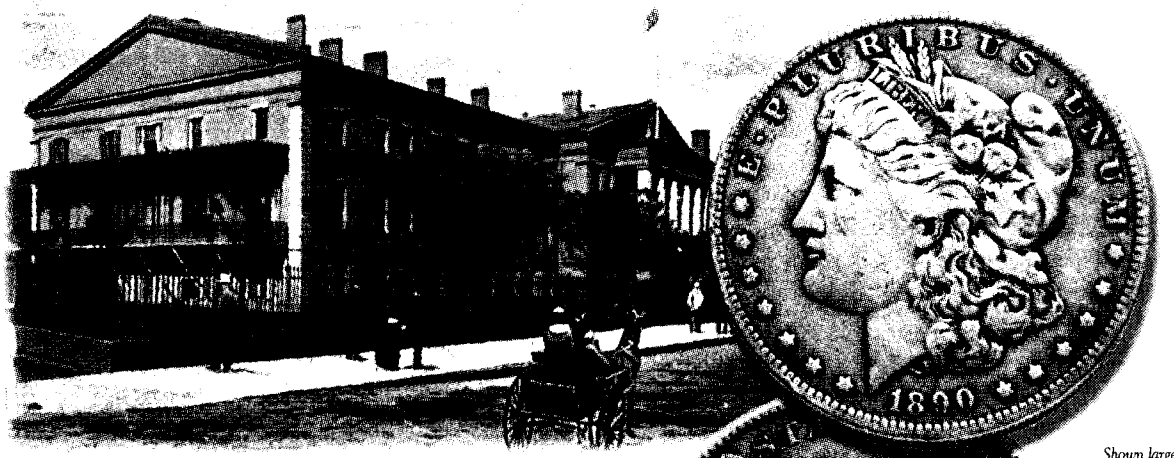

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being done with them, for good or ill, and what should be done. Perhaps it will still be possible to shoehorn the United States into a stretched definition of "empire," but it would look nothing like Britain or Rome. Or perhaps, as I believe, a United States rededicated to its constitutional traditions and embarked on a cooperative course with other nations would find that it possesses untapped reserves of political power, though it will take time for American prestige to recover from Bush's squandering of it.

Until very recently those authentic questions went substantially unexplored outside scholarly journals, and the country instead busied itself repairing the imperial illusions so rudely dashed by the Vietnam War. Suppressing the lessons of the Chinese Revolution had been easy, since the United States had not fought in China. Getting over the lessons of Vietnam took longer. Many segments of American society, none more than the military, had learned them deeply and vowed "never again." (The poignancy of the generals' recent outspoken statement against the conduct of the war in Iraq lies precisely in the officers' chagrin that they did indeed let it happen again.) The lessons were formulated in military terms in the so-called Powell doctrine, requiring that before military action proceeded there must be a clear military—not political—objective, that there must be a commitment to the use of overwhelming force and that there must be an "exit strategy." Nevertheless, in other quarters the lessons were named a "Vietnam syndrome," an illness, and other explanations were brought forward. The lessons of Vietnam were not so much forgotten as vigorously suppressed, in the name of restoring the reputation of America's military power. Ronald Reagan said of the Vietnam military, "They came home without a victory not because they were defeated but because they were denied a chance to win." After the first Gulf War, President Bush crowed, "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all!" The country was getting ready for the second Iraq War, which violated every tenet of the Powell doctrine.

A parallel evolution was occurring in the constitutional domain. The lesson most of the country learned from Watergate and the forced resignation of Richard Nixon was that the imperial presidency had grown too strong. (In general, our imperial-minded Presidents have had much more success rolling back freedom at home than extending it abroad.) Dick Cheney, who had served as Chief of Staff for President Gerald Ford, drew an opposite lesson—that the powers others called imperial were in fact the proper ones for the presidency and had been eviscerated by the opposition to Vietnam and the Watergate scandal. As he has put it, "Watergate and a lot of the things around Watergate and Vietnam, both during the 1970s, served, I think, to erode the authority...the President needs to be effective, especially in the national security area." Taking the Nixon presidency as a model rather than a cautionary tale, he sees new usurpation as restoration. In doing so, he brings an old theme back in new guise—that American weakness in the world is caused by domestic opponents at home. In his view domestic subversion—this time of executive authority, not misguided imperial ambition—is the country's problem.

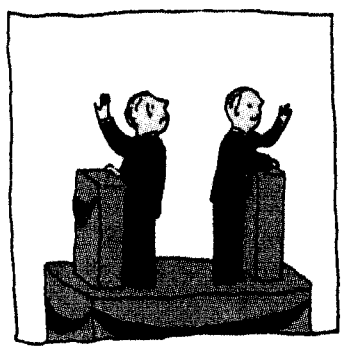
Can this pattern be broken? Voices are already being heard advising that the opposition to the Iraq War and the failed vision it embodies should, with the next election in mind, now embrace a generalized new readiness to use force. But that way lies only a new chapter in the sorry history of the pitiful, helpless giant. The needed lesson is exactly the opposite—to learn or relearn, or perhaps we must say re-relearn, the lessons regarding the limitations on the use of force that have been taught and then rejected so many times in recent decades. Only then will we be able to stop repeating ourselves and, giving up dreams of imperial grandeur, start saying and doing something new. ■

THE LAMONT/LIEBERMAN DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY IS A KEY TEST OF ANTIWAR SENTIMENT.

A Fight for the Party's Soul

JOHN NICHOLS

Never mind the internecine Democratic politics of Connecticut and the role that ethnic, labor and local sentiments will play in deciding the primary contest between centrist Senator Joe Lieberman and liberal challenger Ned Lamont. Never mind that the contest has made Connecticut the front line in an increasingly bitter brawl involving MoveOn.org and the liberal blogosphere on one side and the Democratic Leadership Council and a substantial contingent of the party's Washington elite on the other. Never mind that both sides spend inordinate amounts of time debating whether George W. Bush thanked Lieberman for the senator's unwavering support of the Iraq War with a slobbering kiss or merely a peck on the cheek when the two embraced at a State of the Union address.



CAITLIN DOWER

When the votes are counted on August 8, the whole of the Connecticut primary, and much of the national debate over the direction of the Democratic Party, will be boiled down to a one-line pronouncement. It will either be "Antiwar challenger trounces Lieberman" or "Lieberman prevails over war foes." The reduction of this complex contest to a headline may not be entirely fair, or entirely accurate. Yet it will be understandable, because to the surprise of just about everyone, the man Democrats nominated for Vice President in 2000 is in a fight for his political life

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with a previously unknown candidate who decided a few months ago to surf the wave of anger stirred by Lieberman's emergence as the loudest Democratic defender of the occupation of Iraq.

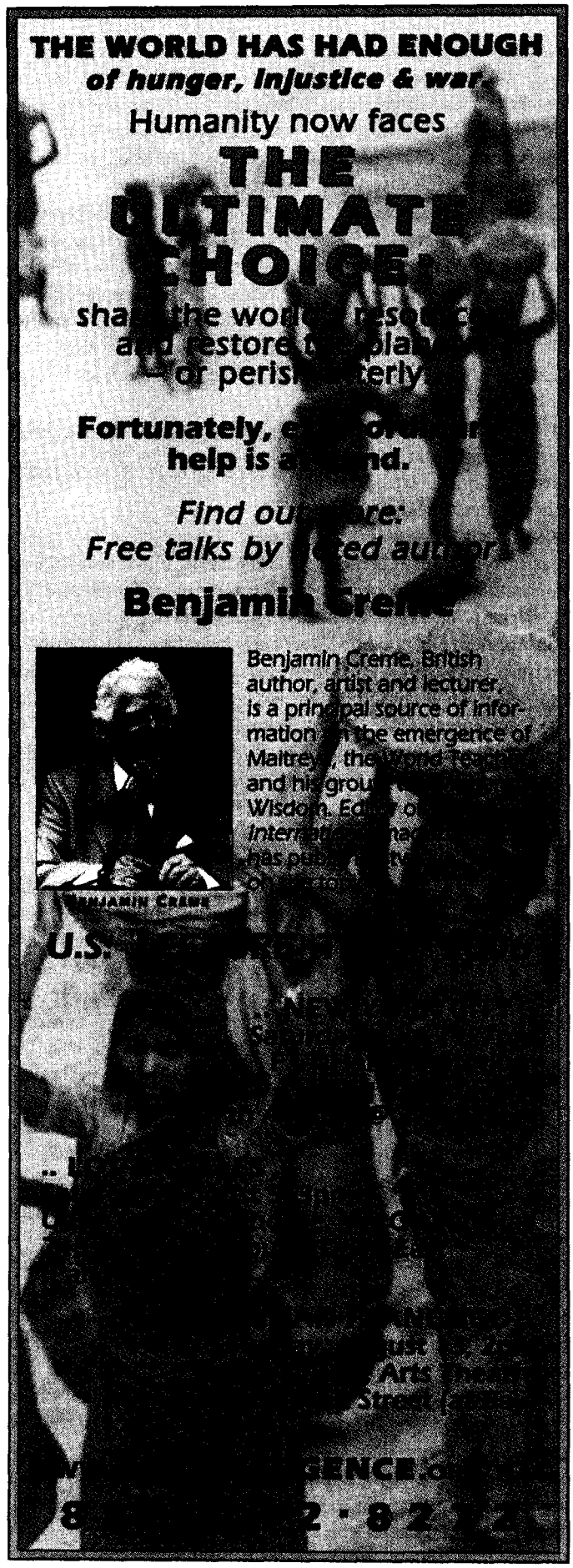
Of course, if Lieberman prevails, antiwar liberals will claim that Lamont took on an impossible task and did better than expected. But few who have paid attention to the dynamics on the ground in Connecticut—where a recent Quinnipiac poll found 73 percent of voters disapprove of Bush's handling of the war—or the broader national debate about how Democrats should address the occupation of Iraq will see it that way. Lamont may have started as a "nobody"—albeit a very wealthy and politically savvy "nobody"—but a smart, well-funded campaign, generous media attention and the hard work of a very attractive candidate and his energetic grassroots supporters will by election day have made the challenger Lieberman's match. Indeed, a mid-July Quinnipiac poll had Lamont ahead 51 to 47. As such, the Connecticut primary will be a no-excuses test of whether Democratic voters—who tell pollsters they desperately want a clean break with Bush and his war but who have not always embraced candidates who propose to make it—are now willing to hold prominent Democratic officials accountable for facilitating the madness of King George. If Connecticut Democrats reject Lieberman, Democrats in Washington, including 2008 presidential prospect Hillary Clinton, will have to take notice. If Lieberman prevails on August 8, or if he loses in the primary but wins as an independent candidate in November, then the DLC and its amen corner will argue more aggressively than before that the Democratic Party and its candidates must continue to eschew not just a tough antiwar stance but the general opposition to all things Bush that grassroots activists demand. "This is a fight for the soul of the Democratic Party," argues the DLC's Marshall Wittmann.

That's what's riding on Connecticut.

That's what's riding on Ned Lamont.

So why is the challenger seemingly so at ease with just a few weeks to go before the primary? Why is Ned Lamont smiling? "I love being in this race," the candidate declares, without a hint of irony, to the crowd at an Indian restaurant in downtown Stamford after a long evening of answering questions he has answered a few hundred times before. That's the secret of Ned Lamont. He is not merely the "cable TV millionaire" reporters mention when seeking a shorthand description for the 52-year-old former newspaper editor, public radio host, local elected official, telecommunications entrepreneur and Democratic donor who was drawn into the race against Lieberman only after more prominent war foes begged off. Rather, he is a self-admitted political junkie who, like a rock critic who finally forms a band, has been waiting a very long time for this chance in the spotlight. Maybe a lifetime. After all, it's in his blood.

Lamont's great-grandfather Thomas Lamont, whose partnership with J.P. Morgan created the family fortune that has provided a firm financial base for Ned's business and political endeavors, was one of Woodrow Wilson's negotiators on the Treaty of Versailles. Ned's great-uncle Corliss was a leading figure in the American Civil Liberties Union and a founder of the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee who successfully sued the Central Intelligence Agency in a groundbreaking challenge to



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domestic spying—and who would no doubt be proud of the Senate candidate's support of Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold's proposal to censure Bush for authorizing warrantless wiretaps. Lamont's father, Ted, an economist, helped administer the Marshall Plan after World War II and served with George Romney—Massachusetts Governor Mitt's liberal dad—in Richard Nixon's Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"Our family always has believed in international cooperation, that the way to achieve a safer and freer world is through hard-working diplomacy and a good respect for the opinions of other countries in getting the job done, rather than seizing the military option too soon," Ted Lamont told a Connecticut reporter after his son announced the Senate candidacy. For his part, Ned Lamont speaks about the broad sweep of American foreign policy over the past century in the familiar language of someone who sat down for family dinners with those who shaped it. So when he talks about the war in Iraq, it is not as a shrill critic but rather as an old-school liberal internationalist who cannot believe that George Bush and Joe Lieberman have rejected diplomacy and smart strategies like containment for cowboy adventurism and neglect of fundamental realities in the Middle East. "This war is way outside the historical norm," Lamont says, arguing that the Administration has adopted "a go-it-alone strategy, a sense that we don't need allies, we don't have to listen to the rest of the world. That's contrary to the American tradition, and it's really not in our self-interest."

'Rather than spend $250 million a day in Iraq, we've got to start investing in education.'
—Ned Lamont

When Lamont offers his critique of "George Bush and Joe Lieberman's" foreign policies to the business owners who have gathered at the Indian restaurant in Stamford, several of whom make favorable references to "the House of Morgan," every head in the room nods. And when he quotes former Connecticut Senator Abe Ribicoff's Vietnam-era suggestion that America is strongest not when it brandishes arms but when it earns the respect of the world, the nodding heads are smiling. "This makes sense to me," says Pravin Banker, director of the Global Financial Network, who had introduced Lamont earlier in the evening. "It's refreshing to hear someone who knows about diplomacy, who recognizes that the US can do a better job of working with the world."

This reaction to Lamont is one that Lieberman failed to anticipate when he noticed that a "Greenwich millionaire," as his increasingly shrill campaign ads label Lamont, was nipping at his heels. Shaken by the seriousness of the challenge, Lieberman has tried to dismiss Lamont as a "single issue" antiwar challenger backed by loony-left bloggers, while his backers have taken to hysterical grumbling, like that of the DLC's Wittmann and Steven Nider in a recent *Hartford Courant* column, about how "far too many Democrats view George W. Bush as a greater threat to the nation than Osama bin Laden."

"They keep talking about how 'Ned and the blogger left are attacking bipartisan Joe,'" says Lamont. "That is so wrong. They've been so over-the-top about this that people don't take them seriously. When I meet people, when they hear me talk about these issues, they recognize that I'm coming at them from a very mainstream place."

Lamont's a reasonably standard liberal who agrees with Russ Feingold and Ted Kennedy on most social and economic issues. But he is not a populist rebel in the mold of Paul Wellstone. His blood runs blue. Indeed, with his summer suit and Kennedy-perfect haircut, he looks for all the world like a *Doonesbury* extra. Maybe in some circles, that's an insult. But not in Connecticut, where the cartoon was born and where voters have sent their share of liberal patricians to Washington—including Lieberman's predecessor, Lowell Weicker, now an enthusiastic Lamont backer. Once upon a time, they ran and won, as Weicker did, on the Republican line. And Lamont is not shy about the fact that "my family were internationalist Republicans going back for generations." But as the candidate's father says, "The Republican Party, frankly, no longer [represents] my viewpoints. The so-called moderate Republicans are rare and declining, especially in recent years." The father says he stopped voting for Republicans in 1992; the son has been a Democrat a lot longer—inspired in his youth, he says, by Bobby Kennedy.

It is that Bobby Kennedy connection that may be the most useful reference point for Lamont's candidacy. In 1968 two Democratic senators challenged President Lyndon Johnson's ambitions for a second full term. One was Minnesota's Eugene McCarthy, who ran a campaign primarily defined by his opposition to the Vietnam War. The other was Kennedy, who opposed the war but offered a far broader promise of reform and renewal—for the Democratic Party and America. Kennedy's 1968 campaign, with its emphasis on fighting poverty and making real the promise of the American dream for all Americans, argued that the expensive war in Southeast Asia was robbing this country of the resources and energy required to achieve progress at home. Lamont offers an updated version of the Kennedy message. "Rather than spend $250 million a day in Iraq, we've got to start investing in education," says Lamont, who has volunteered for years as a teacher in a Bridgeport high school and whose best campaign commercials feature former students, all of them African-Americans and Latinos, chanting: "Go for it, Mr. Lamont!"

Lieberman finds himself forced into the Lyndon Johnson role, about right from an ideological standpoint. He's more conservative than most Democrats, but he's not Ann Coulter in drag—even if Coulter is backing him. Lieberman has been the most vocal Democratic backer of Bush's foreign policies, and he has also sided with Senate Republicans to block attempts to filibuster Samuel Alito's Supreme Court nomination, to explore Social Security privatization, to back free trade and corporate bailouts, to intercede in the Terri Schiavo right-to-die case and, of course, to engage in tiresome moralizing about Bill Clinton's extramarital shenanigans. Yet, he's got a lifetime AFL-CIO "pro-labor" voting record of 84 percent. Connecticut unions have split in this contest, with the labor federation backing Lieberman and the state's teachers unions backing Lamont. Lieberman's

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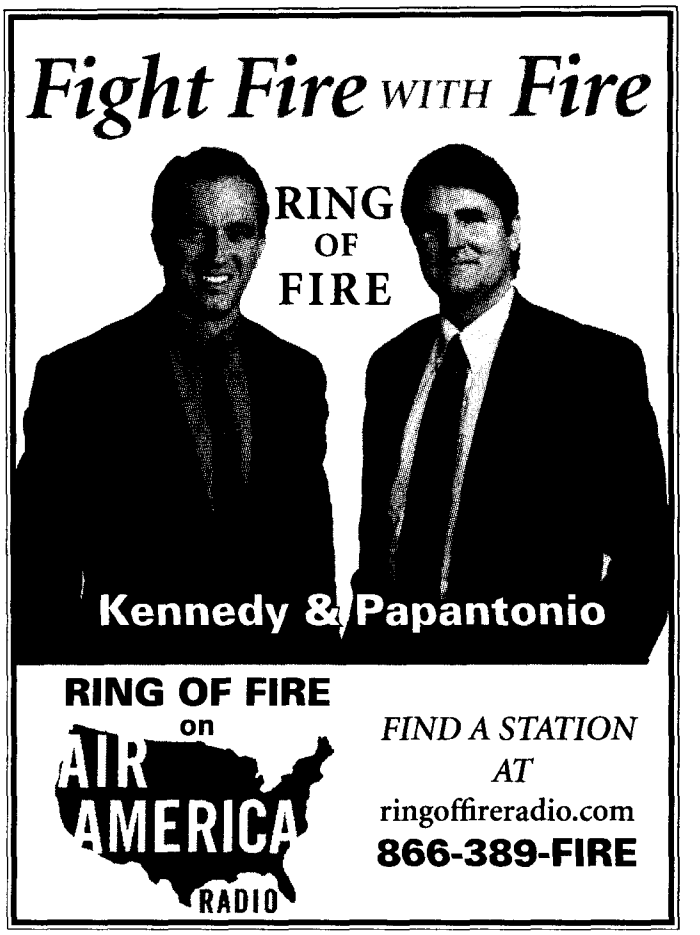
also got endorsements from Planned Parenthood, the League of Conservation Voters and liberal Democrats like California's Barbara Boxer and Connecticut's senior senator, Chris Dodd, as well as Hillary and Bill Clinton—although, notably, Feingold and Massachusetts Senator John Kerry have refused to endorse the senator, as has Lieberman's 2000 running mate, Al Gore.

Even as he brandishes his endorsements, however, and declares, "I am running based on my record as a progressive Democrat and...Ned is running against me based on my stand on one issue: Iraq," Lieberman seems compromised and desperate—the embodiment of a Democratic Party that lacks fresh blood, ideas and energy. In the one televised debate between the candidates, Lieberman borrowed Ronald Reagan's "there you go again" presidential debate line, and he paraphrased Lloyd Bentsen's "you're no Jack Kennedy" jab from the his vice presidential debate. The senator interrupted Lamont constantly and attacked him with a venom that never surfaced in his 2000 vice presidential debate with Dick Cheney. "You get the idea that Lieberman has a sense of entitlement, that it's his office and no one has a right to take it from him," says Connecticut Democratic activist John Wirzbicki, who writes the Lamont-friendly blog Connecticut Blue.

Lamont's counter to Lieberman in the debate was upbeat rather than defensive. He let the senator take his shots, then talked about what ought to distinguish Democrats from Republicans. It wasn't just the war. It was much broader, a vision of engagement with the world and a search for solutions to fundamental challenges at home. It's a liberal vision, to be sure. But Lamont, descended from all those generations of Republican internationalists and comfortable portraying himself as a Washington outsider—he opens just about every speech with the line: "My name is Ned Lamont, and I'm not a traditional politician. I started up a business from scratch"—believes it is a vision that has appeal far beyond the blogosphere and MoveOn meet-ups.

That's essential, because if Lieberman loses the primary, he promises to mount a fall campaign for re-election on his own "Connecticut for Lieberman" line. The initial spin was that Lieberman would win a three-way race by isolating Democrat Lamont on the left and a Republican on the right. But sentiments are shifting. After Lieberman announced his sore-loser strategy, Hillary Clinton said she would back the party nominee in November, and it's no secret that Senate minority leader Harry Reid and other top Democrats have begun behind-the-scenes conversations with Lamont. Whether the AFL-CIO and other national interest groups stick with Lieberman will be a critical question, but the best bet right now is that if Lamont wins the primary, he'll have a reasonably united Democratic front behind him as he takes his campaign to suburbs where independents and Republicans predominate. "Don't tell me that being opposed to this war and saying that we could be spending money that's going to Iraq more usefully at home is a liberal message, or a Democratic message," he says. "There's nothing in that message that a lot of Connecticut Republicans would disagree with."

Lamont's confidence about his ability to win more than just antiwar protest votes is well founded. It's common on the Connecticut campaign trail to run into Democratic voters like Harriet Scureman. "I used to be against Joe, because of the war



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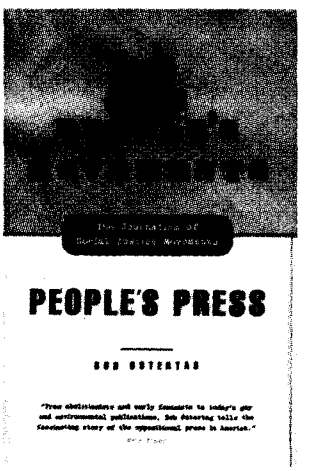

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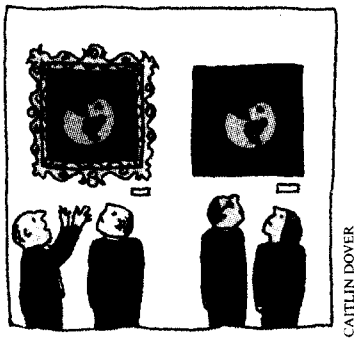
and a bunch of other issues," says Scureman, a retired Xerox employee from Norwalk. "But as the campaign's gone on, I've realized I'm *for* Ned Lamont. You can't meet him, listen to him, and not come to the conclusion that he would be a great senator." If a majority of Connecticut voters reach the same conclusion in August and again in November, it will not merely be a defeat for a single centrist senator who supports the war. It will also be a win for a new Democratic mindset, one that displays the energy, enthusiasm and vision that the party will need if it intends to lead the country out of the wilderness of the Bush years. ■

THE PROMISE—AND PITFALLS—OF AN ALLIANCE WITH FOREIGN POLICY REALISTS.

The Left Gets Real

EYAL PRESS

This past October after Brent Scowcroft, the National Security Adviser under George H.W. Bush, vented his frustration with the current Administration's foreign policy in an interview with *The New Yorker*, the liberal blogosphere anointed him a hero. "Scowcroft is a poet," gushed one blogger on Daily Kos, which trumpeted the news under the heading "Scowcroft's Scathing Critique of the Iraq Debacle." "Wow," cooed another. "Amen," wrote a third.



CAITLIN DOVER

Some of what Scowcroft said about his former boss's son was indeed scathing. Scowcroft's admirers in cyberspace, though, were curiously silent about other, less savory aspects of his career. In 1989, several months after the Tiananmen Square massacre, for example, Scowcroft was dispatched to China to smooth over relations with Beijing, which he did by toasting his Chinese hosts at a banquet. He was Henry Kissinger's deputy back when the Nixon Administration was prolonging the Vietnam War. Like Kissinger, Scowcroft is a self-proclaimed realist for whom moral considerations pale next to strategic concerns.

This is not a school of thought that has traditionally mustered sympathy on the left. In the 1980s realists were among the people who argued that the United States should maintain cozy ties with apartheid South Africa if it suited our strategic interests. They had no objection, in principle, to forging alliances with dictators in countries like Indonesia and Chile. They scoffed at human rights advocates who demanded that foreign policy hew to certain ethical principles, a perspective realists tend to dismiss as naïve, since diplomacy is, at root, a Machiavellian struggle for power in a cutthroat world.

Many realists still hold such views. And yet, since the attacks of September 11, the gulf that once separated them from liberal and radical critics of US foreign policy appears to have narrowed, if not altogether disappeared. The views of realist thinkers like Anatol Lieven, Andrew Bacevich and Chalmers Johnson now appear frequently in the left-liberal press. This fall *The Nation*, whose pages have regularly featured their voices, will be co-hosting a discussion with *The National Interest*, a realist journal that has Daniel Pipes and Zbigniew Brzezinski on its masthead, about views of realism from the left and the right. Groups like MoveOn.org have sprinkled their press releases with collegial references to Kissinger and Scowcroft. The Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy, an alliance of experts that formed not long ago to oppose the Bush Administration's overseas agenda, has issued statements bearing the signatures of former Reagan Administration officials as well as left-leaning academics like Bruce Cumings, Joel Beinin and Marilyn Young.

As progressives attempt to thrash out a compelling alternative to the Bush Administration's foreign policy vision, it's worth asking whether these are mere tactical alliances or if there is something deeper under way—a warming to realism among disillusioned critics of the Iraq War, born of growing unease with the idea of a US foreign policy that even aspires to promote positive ideals. Next to the White House's messianic post-9/11 agenda, realism, which stresses the limits of power and the danger of launching open-ended crusades to rid the world of evil, is understandably appealing—all the more so because it's hard for neoconservatives and other Administration supporters to dismiss its devotees as "soft." Realists, after all, are famously hard-nosed about power. The withering appraisals of the Bush Administration penned by realists in recent years have acknowledged that Al Qaeda is a threat but have argued that we've exacerbated it by assuming it is our right to topple foreign governments and export our values to places like the Middle East. They have echoed Walter Lippmann, who in 1965 explained his opposition to the Vietnam War by warning, "A mature great power will make measured and limited use of its power. It will eschew the theory of a global and universal duty which not only commits it to unending wars of intervention but intoxicates its thinking with the illusion that it is a crusader for righteousness, that each war is a war to end all war."

The words sound eerily prescient. Before one goes too far in romanticizing Lippmann, though, it bears recalling that, as his biographer Ronald Steel has observed, the celebrated columnist "did not view foreign policy as a moral issue. For him it was a question of geopolitics and a cold calculation of national interest." Is the left in the era of George W. Bush resigned to seeing the world from a similarly jaded perspective? Shouldn't progressives who care about human rights and democracy—and

Eyal Press is a Nation *contributing writer.*

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want to see these terms reclaimed from the neoconservatives who have hijacked them—be concerned about this? Or is the rapprochement between realists and the left a healthy sign that progressives have given up on the misguided goal of aggressively promoting America's values abroad?

Rashid Khalidi, professor of Middle Eastern history at Columbia University, cautions against viewing the growing camaraderie between realists and the left as anything more than a chance intersection, driven by mutual opposition to George W. Bush rather than a shared set of principles. "I don't find it strange that the attacks on the Bush Administration from within the CIA or from retired military officers or from other realists should be welcome on the left," says Khalidi. "That doesn't mean that we've all become Brzezinski/Scowcroft realists. It simply means that what they're saying in many respects is absolutely true."

Khalidi has a point. And considering how frozen out of power progressives have been in recent years, it's hardly surprising that some leftists find it heartening that a growing chorus of realists, from Richard Clarke to Brzezinski, has come to echo their views of the Bush Administration. Yet others feel there has been an accompanying tendency to gloss over the more unsettling aspects of the realist worldview. "The Bush Administration's move toward a regressive form of foreign policy idealism has created an unacknowledged nostalgia for realism among many people on the left," says Richard Falk, professor of international relations at UC-Santa Barbara. "Of course, that's difficult for people to acknowledge because it's a retrospective affirmation of people like Kissinger." Falk himself acknowledges that "relative to imperialism, yes, realism is better than that. But is it good enough for the kind of world order that is both desirable and sustainable? I would say no."

One thing realists and many leftists share is deep skepticism about America's claim to moral superiority and to acting with benign, idealistic intentions. "I'm a historian and I look at the way idealism has tended to operate, and it's not a pretty picture," says Khalidi. "I don't have a lot of sympathy for people who feel you can ride the horse of American foreign policy for idealistic purposes without that horse having a mind of its own—there's an institutional reality there. Just look at Iraq—bases, oil, the Project for the New American Century. These things were infinitely more important than idealism, and I have great difficulty understanding how anybody could have failed to see that."

Falk goes so far as to say that "at this point in history, the US is so suspect as a vehicle for promoting democracy or human rights that one should repudiate these visionary claims." At the same time, however, he also says, "I think there's not only a place for idealism but a need for it."

Of course, one can argue that these two sentiments are not contradictory: One can be a realist about what to expect from the Bush Administration and an idealist about how the world ought to be. Six years ago, in May 2000, this magazine published a special issue devoted to outlining "A New Vision for Foreign Policy" that brimmed with idealistic suggestions: the creation of a viable International Criminal Court, a global push for energy efficiency, a renewed commitment to nuclear nonproliferation, an American agenda geared around Franklin

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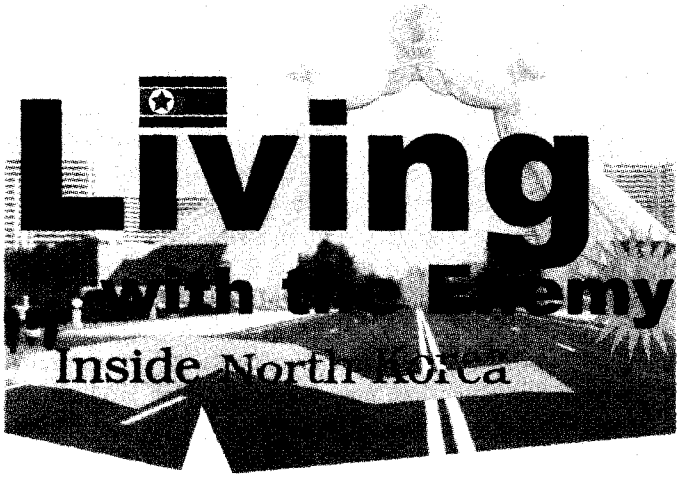

This book offers a quite unique look at a land that has both intrigued and puzzled outsiders for decades. Dr. Saccone lived and worked in North Korea studying their behavior while chronicling his fascinating experiences. Travel the country like few foreigners have and meet North Koreans on their terms. Finally, we can learn how North Koreans live, think and act from a person who penetrated the facade presented to most foreigners. He has broken the code on this interesting but little understood culture.

Author_ Richard Saccone

• Publisher_ HOLLYM International Corp.
• ISBN_ 1-56591-234-9
www.hollym.com
• Page_ 348 pp.
• Price_ $25.95 (paperback)

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Roosevelt's vision of "an attainable world in which there would be not only freedom of speech and worship but also freedom from want and fear." The latter sentiment appeared in a cover essay by Kai Bird, who told me he sees no reason the left should be any less vocal about championing such an agenda today, notwithstanding the slim chance that it will be adopted by Bush. "I would argue that nothing has changed," he says. "There's been a corruption of language, and the United States is a lot more unpopular than we were before, and the world looks at us as hypocrites. But if we were to elect a liberal-left President and the Democrats took back the House and Senate, we could make things different."

It is a view more radical critics dismiss as naïve. "There can be no such thing as a 'positive U.S. foreign policy agenda,'" wrote Tariq Ali in response to an e-mail asking whether he saw any place for idealism in US foreign policy—and he was not speaking merely of the Bush Administration. "The foreign policy of Empires past and present is dominated by defending their interests and those of states or satrapies allied to or controlled by them. This has been the case with the United States for over 200 years."

A large segment of the left has grown cynical about democracy promotion, viewing it as a ploy to shore up US influence abroad.

Like many realists, Ali and others on the radical left look askance at the idea of using American power—in particular, military force—to alleviate humanitarian crises of the kind that unfolded in Bosnia and Rwanda during the 1990s. "There are occasions in extremis when an intervention is needed, but even here it is best if it were carried out regionally," Ali believes. Practically speaking, this is not so different from what the CATO Institute's Ted Galen Carpenter told me. American troops should be deployed abroad, he said, only when there is a pressing "security issue" at stake. One side opposes "humanitarian intervention" because it will further an imperial agenda, the other because foreign policy shouldn't (to paraphrase a famous remark of Henry Kissinger's) be confused with charity work. Both balk at the sort of values-driven outlook that led some liberals to support the Iraq War on humanitarian grounds.

In 2000, in its special issue on foreign policy, *The Nation* ran a forum on humanitarian intervention in which Holly Burkhalter, advocacy director of Physicians for Human Rights, wrote: "We as citizens should demand that our President declare the principle that prevention and suppression of genocide and crimes against humanity, and punishment of those responsible, are of vital interest to the United States, and announce a program to make this pledge meaningful." One suspects many people on the left would hesitate before issuing such a call right now: Burkhalter's reasoning, after all, could have been invoked to justify the US invasion of Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein. (The Iraqi dictator may not have been committing genocide at the time of the invasion, but few would argue his regime hadn't perpetrated massive crimes against humanity.) And yet, judging by the number of students and peace activists currently urging the international community—including the United States—to do something to stop the carnage in Darfur, it's clear many progressives still believe some humanitarian crises do warrant outside intervention. Several people I interviewed said that, notwithstanding the lessons of Iraq, progressives should remain open to the possibility that some situations justify this—ideally, by a UN force empowered with what foreign policy expert Sherle Schwenninger terms "the right to protect" in a way that "doesn't depend on a particular first world imperial power's interests."

The debate about humanitarian intervention is arguably less pressing today than it was in the 1990s. Not so with human rights, an area where it seems that the views of realists and progressives would sharply diverge. Hard-core realists consider human rights a peripheral concern, at best. Liberals and radicals have spent decades dreaming of the day when America's leaders would place human rights principles at the center of their worldview.

Now that the Bush Administration (in its rhetoric, at least) has done just that, however, some on the left have begun to wonder whether those principles have been emptied of their meaning—or, worse, turned into a justification for launching unilateral wars. "The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world," declared Bush in his second inaugural address. "America will not pretend that jailed dissidents prefer their chains, or that women welcome humiliation and servitude," he proclaimed.

The melding of such language with cowboy imperialism—one British newspaper likened the second inaugural to a bulletin from "the armed wing of Amnesty International"—has put advocates of human rights in something of a bind. "I think the human rights movement has allowed the Bush Administration to appropriate human rights language and has been very confused in its response," acknowledges William Schulz, who until recently served as executive director of Amnesty International USA. The war in Iraq, he notes, threw into sharp relief the fact that a discourse advocates had always assumed serves the interests of the powerless against the powerful can be used for very different purposes. Writer David Rieff has gone further, characterizing human rights as "the official ideology of the American empire." Tariq Ali wrote in an e-mail that the discourse of universal rights "has become a weapon to bludgeon states opposed to or nervous of the Washington consensus."

A large segment of the left has grown equally, if not more, cynical about democracy promotion, which many have come to view as a ploy aimed at shoring up America's influence rather than as a tool to open political space in repressive countries. The Bush Administration's reactions to recent elections in Iraq and Palestine seem to confirm this: We're all for human rights and democracy, on condition that the people we've liberated do what we want. But those elections also show that democracy promotion can have results its architects neither control nor predict, which is among the reasons Zachary Lockman, chair of the Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies program at New York University, believes it would be a mistake for the left to cede the discourse on human rights and democracy to conservatives. "I think we need to embrace these ideas," he says, "but the key is to

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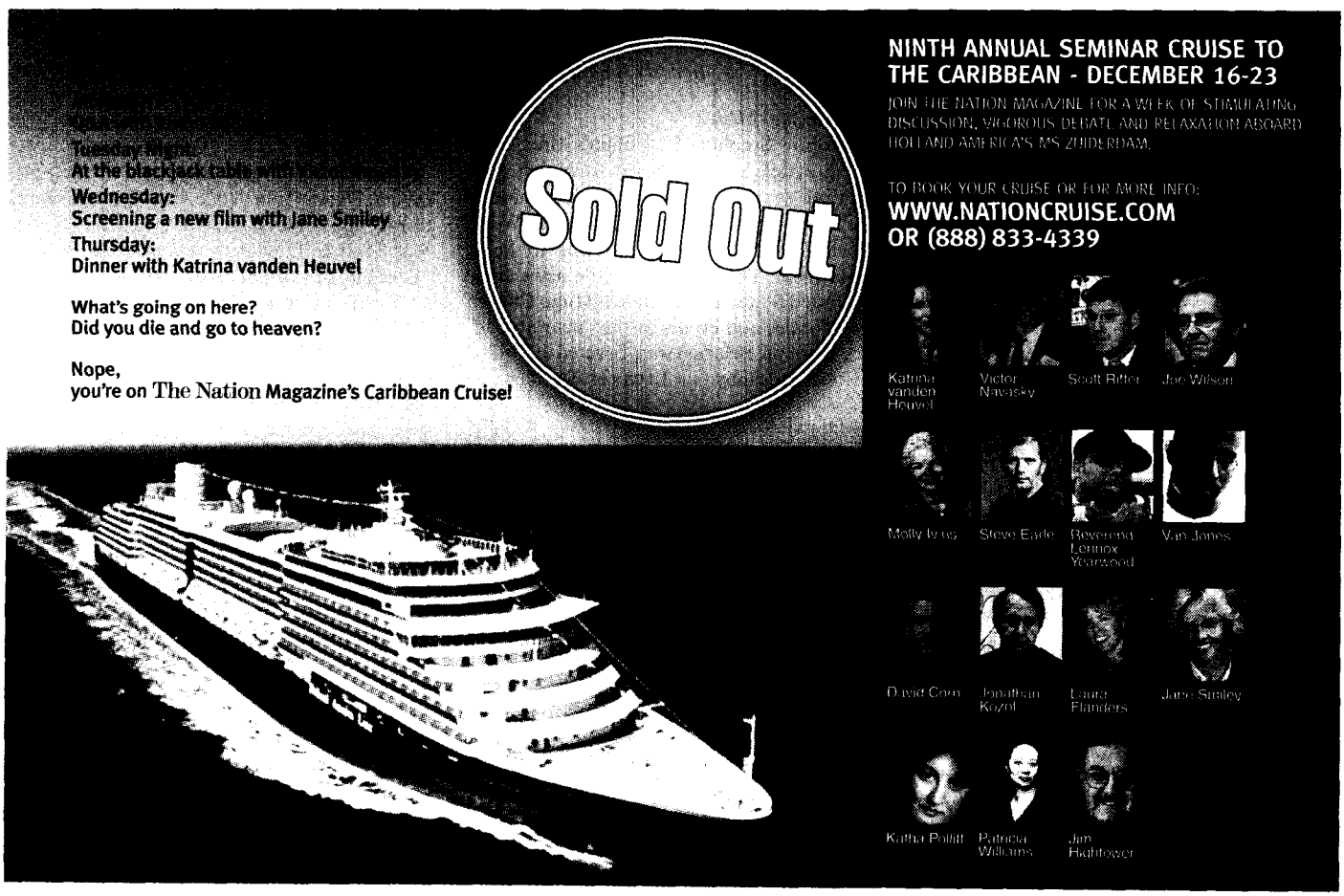
have a consistent set of standards that place at the center of US foreign policy a commitment to supporting the struggles of people for democracy, human rights and freedom in all cases, not merely when it suits our interests. That means distancing from and putting pressure on some regimes that have long been our allies in the Middle East. It means respecting the needs and aspirations of the people in the region."

Lockman acknowledges that there is good reason some on the left have grown cynical about the very terms human rights and democracy. But, he adds, "in places around the world, people go into the streets and risk their lives for these things." Too often in the past, he contends, the left has failed to voice support for human rights in countries that happen to be enemies of the United States and thus made it easy for conservatives to claim they alone care about the people there, something he feels happened in the prelude to the war in Iraq. Although progressives drew attention to the inhumanity of the sanctions (which supporters of the war either ignored or justified), the crimes of the Baathist regime were often passed over in silence. This inattention was "a very grave problem because it allowed the right to seize the moral high ground," he argues.

Those on the left who wince at the very idea of exporting democracy are not necessarily apologists for the likes of Saddam Hussein. Like most people in the world today, they simply don't trust Washington's intentions. But the question remains: If the rhetoric of rights is dismissed as a mere cover for imperialism, where does that leave the ideology underlying it? Need that be discarded as well? Should activists in America not stand up for the rights of dissidents in places like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Egypt? Should we not express solidarity with those fighting against repression in places like Cuba and Iran? It's perfectly reasonable to debate the form such solidarity should take (US funding of opposition groups in Iran, for instance, has elicited complaints from within that country that this merely discredits and endangers those fighting for freedom there). But it's unsettling to imagine the very principle being questioned.

That said, there is no getting around the fact that terms such as freedom, human rights and democracy have acquired a bad name. Is there any way to alter this—to reclaim these terms from the neocons, who have sullied them in the name of regime change and unilateralism?

Some analysts have suggested that the answer lies in forging what might be termed "realism with a human face." Thus Robert Wright, a senior fellow at the New America Foundation, took to the pages of the *New York Times* recently to champion "progressive realism," a foreign policy built on the notion that strategic interests and humanitarian concerns are not contradictory but complementary, particularly in an integrated world where threats like terrorism and disease easily cross borders. Andrew Bacevich has called for reviving a "distinctively American realist tradition" that does not dismiss moral considerations, a view embraced in the past by thinkers such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Charles Beard. Historians Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman are about to publish *Ethical Realism*, a book that promises to illustrate "how the United States can successfully combine genuine morality with tough and practical common sense."



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There are, in fact, strains of realism less plainly amoral than the Kissingerian one. Historian Tony Judt believes the distinction between realism and idealism is, indeed, false. "It may be convenient for professional international relations theory," says Judt, "but most idealist theories of foreign policy are driven by a notion of interest—it's just that they think it's in the interest of the United States to contribute to constructing a better world, and that therefore we operate against our own best interests if we fail to try."

It's a fair point. But "progressive realism" could also be viewed as a clever rhetorical maneuver that glosses over the dilemmas that remain: what to do in cases like Rwanda, how to bal ance the pursuit of strategic interests with the principles of international law. More radical critics of US foreign policy, moreover, might argue that, whatever the label, you can be sure any foreign policy vision with establishment backing will end up benefiting the powerful. In practice, as critics like Noam Chomsky have frequently noted, both Wilsonian idealists and Kissingerian realists have sanctioned remarkably similar prescriptions for the developing world, which won't change until institutions like the IMF, and the distribution of power within the United States, are radically transformed.

Underlying the Chomskian view is a belief that those in the foreign policy establishment, Democrats no less than Republicans, share a set of core assumptions about how the world should be run. This might still be the case among politicians in Washington. But thanks to the radicalism of the Bush Administration, one could argue it is no longer true among intellectuals and foreign policy analysts, or for that matter the American people. You don't have to drop by the headquarters of the War Resisters League these days to find bracing critiques of US imperialism. You can find them in just about every issue of *The National Interest*. You don't have to go searching through the catalogue of Monthly Review Press for scathing assessments of America's policies in the Middle East. Just check out the new releases table at the nearest Barnes & Noble, or go to any city and listen to people talk about the war in Iraq. The left may be more removed from power today than it has ever been. But its ideas about what is wrong with US foreign policy are arguably more widely shared than at any time in recent history. Given this, engaging in dialogue with realists to forge a vision that might appeal to people across the political spectrum who are disgusted with the Bush Administration might not be the worst thing, provided it's understood there are risks as well as benefits to doing so, and that terms like human rights, freedom and democracy should not be thrown away, but salvaged. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

words—they cut me deep as well—but it's the truth. The word "democracy" has become a swearing. And the word "liberal" has become a bloody one. Nobody believes America anymore, nobody has any illusions. They all died in the 1990s. I saw many opinions about the article on the Russian I-net. The main tone is: Bravo, Bravissimo!!! That's the America we would like to be friends with. Greatly surprised,

VLADIMIR VASSILIEV

Somerville, Mass.

■ Stephen F. Cohen takes issue with how the West and in particular the United States have behaved toward Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. He goes on to vividly describe the devastating economic and social problems that continue to afflict the population, including a rising HIV/AIDS epidemic, widespread official corruption, demographic decline, spreading homelessness and a shrinking life expectancy, especially for adult males. But reading the article, I wonder if the increasing authoritarian bent of President Vladimir Putin, with constraints on the press, an ominous new law that "regulates" nongovernmental organizations and attacks on what remains of an independent political opposition could possibly be nurturing the kind of institutions that would help Russia deal with these pressing economic and social problems. The West may not be acting with wisdom in its relations with the Russian Federation, but if the current Russian government chooses to veer increasingly away from genuinely democratic reform—on the rubble of the old system—how will that nurture hope for a better life for Russia's citizens?

JOSHUA RUBENSTEIN
Amnesty International USA

East Lansing, Mich.

■ Apropos Stephen F. Cohen's fine hard-hitting article, I am pleased to report after spending several weeks in Moscow that the main response of the Russian media to Washington's misguided policies seems to be to ignore them. There was very little news about the United States at all, whereas Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales and events in the "near abroad" (e.g., Ukraine, Belarus) were covered extensively. How refreshing!

LEWIS H. SIEGELBAUM

Providence, RI

■ Stephen F. Cohen is the best Russia hand, bar none. I spent two years in *Roosiya* as the empire collapsed and have been horrified at the NATO encirclement, denial of legitimate Russian interests in its neighbors and the insane hostile rhetoric from Dick Cheney. Although I'm depressed by Putin's thuggish authoritarianism, Cheney has emerged as a danger to the world, attacking Russia for trying to influence oil lines on its own border while we've schemed to deny them.

MICHAEL HAMMERSCHLAG

LEFT & RIGHT PULL TOGETHER

Washington, DC

■ Jeremy Brecher and Brendan Smith ["The Pincer Strategy," June 26] are right about the need for a Constitutional Protection League, with "high-profile personalities to speak and organize on behalf of constitutional restoration." Such an organization already exists: The Constitution Project (www.constitutionproject.org) creates working committees of prominent Americans from the right and left to protect the Constitution.

Brecher and Smith suggest, for example, broadening the Iran debate to address the limits of executive branch war powers authority; our War Powers Initiative's recommendations in "Deciding to Use Force Abroad: War Powers in a System of Checks and Balances" do just that. Our Coalition to Defend Checks and Balances highlights both the risk of permanent and unchecked presidential power and the accompanying failure of Congress to exercise its responsibility as a separate branch of government.

The people who work with the Constitution Project—from Edwin Meese, President Reagan's Attorney General and a Distinguished Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, to John Podesta, President Clinton's Chief of Staff and head of the Center for American Progress—may disagree about much, but they put differences aside to protect the Constitution.

VIRGINIA E. SLOAN
The Constitution Project

GADFLYER STILL GADS, STILL FLIES!

■ Lakshmi Chaudhry's "Rage Against the MS-Machine," in our last issue, refers to *Gadflyer* as "now-defunct." *Gadflyer* has gone from being a magazine to a blog, which can be accessed at www.gadflyer.com.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Sunkist Utopian

BRENDA WINEAPPLE

RADICAL INNOCENT: Upton Sinclair.
By Anthony Arthur.
Random House. 380 pp. $27.95.

UPTON SINCLAIR AND THE OTHER AMERICAN CENTURY.
By Kevin Mattson.
Wiley. 294 pp. $25.95.

U.S.!
By Chris Bachelder.
Bloomsbury. 305 pp. Paper $14.95.

One hundred years ago, Upton Sinclair published *The Jungle*, his gut-churning exposé of the meatpacking industry that schoolchildren still read today in their history classes. A well-merchandized sensation, it sold 100,000 copies in the first year, millions after that, was almost immediately translated into seventeen languages, spurred an uptick in vegetarianism, greased the way for the Meat Inspection and Pure Food and Drug acts, and transformed its 27-year-old Socialist author into a celebrity. Teddy Roosevelt called Sinclair a crackpot but invited him to the White House, and meatpacking magnate J. Ogden Armour offered Frank Doubleday, *The Jungle*'s publisher, a huge advertising contract if he would suppress the book. To seal the deal Armour's representative brought a can of preserved meat.

Despite the hoopla—and the royalties—Sinclair wasn't happy. Nothing if not grandiose, he thought his book would end "wage slavery" in the way that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ended chattel slavery and convert his readers to socialism in the bargain. No dice. But hundreds of thousands of readers were transfixed by his graphic descriptions of working conditions in meatpacking plants: employees falling into open cooking vats, diseased cattle passing through slaughterhouses, amputated fingers ground into sausage. Here, for instance, in a legendary passage, Sinclair describes the rodent-beef ratio:

> There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together.

To celebrate the birthday of *The Jungle*, two laudatory biographies have recently appeared, both of them sympathetic to Sinclair's lifelong struggle against injustice and elitism. Anthony Arthur's *Radical Innocent* and Kevin Mattson's fine *Upton Sinclair and the Other American Century* scrupulously document Sinclair's odyssey from *poète maudit* to prolific author of

Sinclair's novel published 100 years ago was [illegible], but it didn't end [illegible] he had hoped

some ninety-odd books, mostly novels but also critiques of religion, consumerism, education and in all cases capitalism. Sinclair is also the man who, with Jack London, founded the Intercollegiate Socialist Society and, later, the Southern California branch of the ACLU; who met both President Roosevelts, corresponded with Harry Truman and called H.L. Mencken, Albert Einstein and Charlie Chaplin his friends; who backed Sergei Eisenstein's effort to make an epic film in Mexico and then betrayed him; who ran for governor of California in 1934 (as a Democrat), promising to end poverty in the state; and who dabbled in spiritualism, all varieties of vegetarianism and never met a fad he didn't like.

Given his résumé, Sinclair seems a great subject for biography, but like his novels,

Brenda Wineapple's most recent book is Hawthorne: A Life *(Random House). She is currently writing a book on Emily Dickinson (Knopf).*

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he comes across as a little dull, definitely priggish and tone-deaf to the needs of others. Still, Anthony Arthur, a professor of literature emeritus at California State University, Northridge, depicts Sinclair as an incurable optimist who, frustrated by a meretricious and uncaring world, found expression for his utopian dreams in art and, later, in socialism. Arthur is also sympathetic to much of the work, snubbed, he believes, by the "literary establishment that failed to appreciate the way he took command of a subject and made it his own." To Kevin Mattson, a history professor at Ohio University, Sinclair is important less for the literary quality of his work—mostly second-rate and unabashedly middlebrow, he concedes—than for the fact that the man volubly expressed what life was like "not just to [Henry] Luce's American century, but to the *other* American century"—that is, the century of exploitation, racism, war and deep class divisions unsung by today's pundits. As Mattson puts it, Sinclair "loved the impact his work had on the course of American history, and that story deserves telling today, even more so now that it is in danger of being forgotten."

In fact, the danger seems small. Unliterary though it may be—Mattson is dead-on there—Sinclair's writing still packs a punch even for those who haven't read his work, which is, in a sense, the subject of yet another book published this year, Chris Bachelder's hilarious novel *U.S!*. Doffing his cap to Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* in a pastiche of reminiscences, interviews, songs, course syllabuses and letters, Bachelder masters all the biographical sources as well as several of Sinclair's self-serving memoirs to produce a spirited portrait of an addled old man in an addled country. His central conceit is that Upton Sinclair, the good-hearted old Socialist who died in 1968 at the age of 90, just won't go away. ("The Left may be dead, Joe, but the fear and hatred of the Left will never die.") Unkillable, Sinclair is ritually assassinated by American culture and just as ritually (and literally) disinterred, all the while impervious to everything but his need to write another tiresome if well-intentioned novel excoriating capitalist greed. His newest book, *A Moveable Jungle!*, is an indictment of corporate outsourcing and the plight of foreign employees.

On the whole, Bachelder's perspective on Sinclair's unsinkability seems right. Just last December, Sinclair was resurrected and assassinated all over again when the *Los Angeles Times* ran a story, bruited in the conservative press, about the recent purchase of a Sinclair letter in which he admitted that one of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti's defense attorneys had told him that the two Italian anarchists were guilty as charged, and yet he published the novel *Boston* anyway, to peddle sympathy for them. Neither Mattson nor Arthur would be surprised by the revelatory letter. Each of them amply demonstrates that Sinclair doubted the innocence of at least one, if not both, of the defendants. Sinclair's real subject in *Boston* was not the guilt or innocence of the anarchists but the institutional xenophobia that denied the two immigrants a fair hearing and sent them to the electric chair.

Interestingly, though, both Mattson and Arthur praise *Boston*, a novel so mind-numbing it manages to squash all interest in Sacco and Vanzetti and depress whatever

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Upton Sinclair, circa 1907

outrage one might feel at the legal cabal that executed them. But Mattson and Arthur praise it for different reasons. To Mattson, who makes no bones about Sinclair's work—"I read Sinclair's novels as political tracts," he explains, "not as exercises in literary expression"—the enigmas of the Sacco and Vanzetti case augured well for Sinclair's writing, for they inserted into it a much needed "layer of complexity." In fact, Mattson argues that *Boston* supplied the "realist dimension to his politics" that ultimately turned what Mencken called the Sunkist Utopian into a card-carrying Democrat willing to work within the party in order to push it to the left.

Arthur, on the other hand, views *Boston* as a notable if flawed literary achievement. (It made Sinclair a Pulitzer Prize contender; he won in 1943 for *Dragon's Teeth*, a book long forgotten, like most of his work.) According to Arthur, not only did Sinclair collect an enormous amount of material for the book but his creation of a Jamesian narrative center, based on Boston matriarch Elizabeth Glendower Evans, prevented the novel from sinking into the moralistic propaganda of books like *The Moneychangers* (a denunciation of J.P. Morgan), *King Coal* (about the Colorado coal strike of 1914) and *Oil!* (an indictment of the petroleum industry). These are just the sort of books that Bachelder spoofs as plodding and predetermined. "The wonderful thing about America is that you always have a shot," he writes, "while the dreadful thing about a Sinclair novel is that you don't."

The difference of opinion over *Boston*, one of emphasis, highlights an important distinction between these commendable biographies. Mattson's real interest lies in the symbolic nature of Sinclair's life; *The Other American Century* is a narrative about utopian idealism, democratic faith and literature as political activism. To Mattson biography grants us insight into the historical questions and broader forces shaping the individual. Though Arthur does not shortchange these issues, he cares about Sinclair qua Sinclair, an often unlikable human being, a teetotaler, a failure as a father and a latter-day Puritan (he backed Prohibition) whose irrepressible spirit and moral urgency tend to mitigate his unrelieved selfishness. This Sinclair is a people's writer who speaks to his audience without condescension or mystification: "He read literature as they did, for instruction, persuasion, and entertainment." Not for him were the Modernist complexities of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

Both authors cogently make their case, and though Arthur's Sinclair is far more palpable—and fallible—than Mattson's prudish but indefatigable progressive, read together their books evoke a man of distinctly American stripe: the activist dreamer with a messianic streak. Bachelder sees him this way too: "Sinclair, who has witnessed a century of horror, who has been killed countless times, tells us that for every act of greed, hatred, and violence, for every Ludlow Massacre, he has witnessed one hundred acts of compassion and cooperation. Do not, he says, tell him that we cannot remake our world. Do not!"

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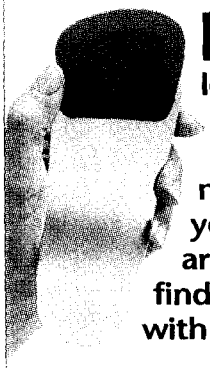

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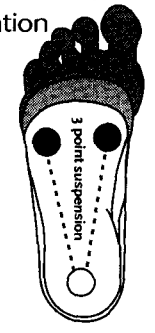

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Born in 1878 in Baltimore to a family he liked to depict as decayed Southern aristocracy, the son of a well-mannered, stern mother and an alcoholic traveling salesman, Sinclair was a sickly child. "The wider breakdown of genteel culture invaded Sinclair's boyhood," Mattson writes, "as if a social and historical virus became a virus inhabiting his little body." Maybe so. More likely, he was a boy on the make whose family moved to New York City ("a city that loves to display economic disparity," intones Mattson) when he was 10. At 13 he entered City College, and within three years he was supporting his mother by selling stories and jokes to pulp magazines. ("Bedbugs made him a Socialist," writes Bachelder. "Bedbugs and Shelley.") Also influenced by Emerson and Carlyle, Sinclair enrolled in graduate school at Columbia University while working for Street and Smith, the publishing syndicate that churned out juvenile books and dime novels.

By 1900—he was 22—Sinclair had dropped out of Columbia, and with his young wife, Meta Fuller, and their newborn son, he moved briefly to a cabin on the St. Lawrence River. Supporting his family with the scant proceeds of his first novel, *Springtime and Harvest* (1900), Sinclair had launched himself, after a fashion. The novel did not sell. But he learned that publicity was as important as aesthetic quality in his first real coup: He pretended his novel *The Journal of Arthur Stirling* (1903) was based on the suicide of a real poet—James Frey in reverse.

Disappointed by poor sales (even the *Stirling* hoax didn't guarantee solvency) and cynical about the literary machine, Sinclair joined the Socialist Party. Mattson likens this new passion to a religious conversion, but according to Arthur it was through meeting two rich Socialists—George Herron (a former college professor) and Gaylord Wilshire (the land speculator for whom LA's Wilshire Boulevard is named)—that Sinclair found intellectual, emotional and financial backing. Herron introduced him to Kropotkin, Kautsky, Veblen and Marx, and provided a coherent framework for his dissatisfaction with American life. Sinclair traced its ills to capitalism, and as a moralist, not a theorist, he firmly believed, as Arthur writes, "change the system, and you will change the people." His newfound political allegiance meant realism in fiction; no more historical fiction, like the Civil War saga *Manassas* (1904). Rather, under the sway of an editor at *Appeal to Reason*, a Populist-Socialist weekly with a circulation of 250,000, Sinclair found his true mission muckraking the Chicago stockyards.

Initially serialized in *Appeal to Reason* and then promoted by Doubleday's savvy publicist Isaac Marcosson, the hugely profitable *The Jungle* allowed Sinclair to undertake an experiment in communal living in Englewood, New Jersey, where he purchased Helicon Hall, a former boys' school. John Dewey was on the board of directors, Sinclair Lewis lived there briefly, and William James, Lincoln Steffens and Emma Goldman all dropped by. But the venture lasted less than a year because a fire of mysterious origins leveled the place. Sinclair then left his wife and son, and after a well-publicized divorce and a brutal account of the failed marriage in his novel *Love's Pilgrimage* (1911), he settled in California permanently with his second wife, Mary Craig Kimbrough, in 1916. As Arthur succinctly notes, "Sinclair's comparative innocence concerning human psychology accounts for his limitations both as a literary artist and a young husband."

Indeed. Sinclair's "radical innocence" is the leitmotif of Arthur's book (hence its title): A man who hears only what he wants to hear, Sinclair is a babe in the woods when dealing with astute politicians like FDR, and he loses the gubernatorial election in California not just because the conservatives in the film industry, business interests in major cities, Republicans and the *Los Angeles Times* ranged themselves against him but because Democrats undermined the candidacy of one widely considered a "millennial ass."

Mattson, who tells the same story, also details the more adroit aspects of Sinclair's plan to end poverty in California (EPIC), which packaged progressive ideas—the call for self-managing farm and factory cooperatives, aided by the government—in a populist idiom that voters could understand. Impressed by Sinclair's political acumen and his prescience about the rise of Fascism, particularly in the historical novels Sinclair wrote from 1940 to 1948, Mattson considers him a proto–Ralph Nader partly responsible for the rise of the New Left, or at least its muckraking arm (although Sinclair supported the war in Vietnam and rejected third-party spoiling). To Mattson this was a man willing to fight for what he believed, in literature and in life, and whose life reveals "the possibilities and limitations of radical protest." Arthur basically agrees. "Sinclair was energetic, principled, and humane," he concludes elegiacally.

But for all their wistful, beseeching encomiums, these good and purposeful books will not, I'm afraid, revive much interest in Upton Sinclair. His resurrection ultimately belongs to Chris Bachelder's comic fusion of Mattson's representative Sinclair with Arthur's idiosyncratic one. Therein lies an insufferable, lovable and irrepressible believer in no real danger of dying:

> I dreamed I saw Sinclair last night
> Alive as you or me
> Says I, 'Sinclair, you're ten times dead'
> 'I'm back again,' says he
> 'I'm back again,' says he. ■

A Burnt-Out Case

NEAL POLLACK

TIMOTHY LEARY: A Biography. By Robert Greenfield. Harcourt. 689 pp. $28.

My intersection with LSD came at a time when Dr. Timothy Leary's legacy had been watered down to near-flavorlessness. It went as follows: One tab of acid at a late-era Grateful Dead show at Soldier Field, where I hallucinated a giant eagle and got mocked by a nurse for wearing a necklace made of Fimo beads that I'd bought in Oregon; another tab two nights later, followed by eight hours of seeing vampires crawl across a leaky apartment ceiling in Evanston, Illinois; and about a quarter-tab in the spring of 1994, which led to a night of then-stereotypically freaky New Orleans French Quarter tourism. While Leary was going about the slow process of dying online in Beverly Hills, surrounded by web geeks who hadn't been born when he began to expand his consciousness, I felt like I was sucking the fumes from a bus that had long since left the station.

In these wretched drug days of wide-

Neal Pollack is the author of The Neal Pollack Anthology of American Literature, Never Mind the Pollacks *and* Alternadad, *which will be published by Pantheon in January.*

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"Project Corpus Callosum"

Sarah Stillman

Yale University

"I never expected to find the secret of my generation's political salvation floating inside a clear glass jar of formaldehyde."

Finalists:

Nikolas Bowie
Yale University

Brie Cubelic
Auburn University

Camila Domonoske
Harrisonburg High School, Harrisonburg, VA

Ziad Jilani
Kennesaw Mountain High School, Kennesaw, GA

LiAnn Yim
New York University

These six essays were chosen from more than 700 entries submitted by high school and college students from 41 states in this first-ever *Nation* Student Writing Contest. All addressed the question of what issue is of most concern to their generation in 800 words or less. The winner received a cash award of $1,000, and her essay was published in the July 17, 2006, issue of *The Nation*. The five finalists received $100 each, and their essays were published at www.thenation.com. For more information on the student writing content and other *Nation* student programs, go to www.thenation.com/student.

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spread crystal-meth addiction, transcontinental Xanax-popping and speed-laced Mexican ditch weed posing as The Chron, it's harder than ever to swallow the idea that mind-altering drug use could transform our staggering society. That prospect becomes even harder to entertain when you consider the most famous proponent of narcotics-fueled social change. Robert Greenfield's comprehensive biography of Leary is an epically thrilling, wicked epitaph for the vain, bizarre, self-promoting guru who, depending on your perspective, either poisoned or blessed our culture with his ridiculous "turn on, tune in and drop out" mantra. As Greenfield boldly and correctly asserts, Leary was the "wrong man" to inherit the future of psychedelic research. Psychiatrist Humphry Osmond, who coined the term "psychedelic," even compared Leary to Hitler—not for the magnitude of his crimes (which were absurd and, other than escaping from prison, arguably not even criminal) but for the transcendent quality of his sociopathic megalomania, which he parlayed into drug guru status.

This 600-page tome doesn't really begin to percolate until Leary starts taking drugs. Until then, it's standard biography: Thoughts of an absent alcoholic father traumatize an intelligent but self-absorbed West Point dropout. A sad childhood leads our protagonist down the path to unfaithful husbandry. His first wife, the mother of his two children, commits suicide. That terrible event, which would shatter an ordinary life, barely seemed to affect Leary; if psychedelics are supposed to destroy the ego, they didn't do a very good job with Tim Leary. The book quotes an anthropologist, experienced with tribal drug-taking cultures, who in the fall of 1960 said that peyote had "no place in our culture or our mythology. We don't have anything that enables us to explain or deal with this and therefore I don't think it is something we can introduce." But by then it was too late. Leary had already slipped acid into the well.

In Greenfield's telling, the great decade began as self-parody in Cambridge, Massachusetts, while Leary was still a lecturer at Harvard. More specifically, it was Halloween, 1960. Leary was conducting sleazy, absurd drug "experiments" at his house. A houseguest ingested a lot of psilocybin. Meanwhile, Leary's preteen daughter Susan was having a slumber party upstairs. The guest went upstairs and lay in the bed in the middle of the room. When Leary pulled him out, his guest referred to the girls as "middle-class bitches" who needed him to "stir them up a little." Leary almost let him, deciding at the last second that the party was Susan's "trip." He said, "You have the right to do anything you want so long as you don't lay your trip on anyone else." What Greenfield refers to as "the first commandment of the psychedelic era" was actually born as a way to keep a guy from sexually molesting a bunch of girls. I suppose Leary should, at least, get credit for preventing that.

Greenfield systematically shatters the still-self-perpetuating myths of what was once called the counterculture, portraying it as little more than a freaky mirror image of mainstream celebrity-obsessed America. He's brilliant at charting the course that self-styled 1960s rebels took toward careerism and self-aggrandisement, though certain characters, like Ken Kesey and Richard Alpert/Baba Ram Dass, come off better than others. A little more than halfway through the book, as the tumult of 1968 swirls around Leary, Greenfield pinpoints the birth of the "speaker-leader phenomenon, which made stars out of the leading counterculture figures":

> Tim was a pioneer of the lifestyle. His view of what was going on in America was restricted to what he saw on his way to and from the airport, the questions he answered after his lecture, and whatever happened at the party that followed. Like a rock star, Tim appeared, performed, and then left. Between his own life and the lives of those more than twenty-five years younger than he, there was virtually no connection.

Throughout, Leary comes off as a political flake, with the notable exception of his futile but passionate attempts to get the Yippies to call off the 1968 Democratic National Convention protests. Otherwise, he was either behind the times or way off in his assessments. He didn't attend his first peace rally until 1969. His meandering testimony in front of Ted Kennedy at the 1966 Senate LSD hearings (which Greenfield re-creates brilliantly) hurt his cause, though maybe his cause was always self-promotion anyway. He allowed the Weathermen to break him out of prison and then escaped to Algeria, where he aligned himself with a clearly insane Eldridge Cleaver.

When Leary arrives in Algeria for a period of "exile" after his dramatic California prison break, Greenfield's book really takes off. Zonked on more drugs and booze than seems humanly possible, Leary continually misread his own surroundings. In an October 1970 letter to Allen Ginsberg, he described Algeria—an austere Muslim state ruled by a military dictatorship—as "perfect. Great political Satori.... Socialism works here.... Young people smiling...no irritation...no money hustle, spirit of youth & growth." He started carrying guns and advocating violence, praising dynamite as "the white light, the external manifestation of the inner white light of the Buddha." He encouraged the Weathermen to start hijacking planes and kidnapping "prominent sports figures." Then the zeitgeist shifted. Leary became a bit of an underdog. The trip may be enjoyable and enlightening, but the hangover is always more dramatic.

At this point, Greenfield's portrayal softens. Leary suddenly becomes a figure of pathos, a cocaine-snorting Willy Loman who can't understand that the world has no more use for him. Under the strange thrall of an international arms dealer in Switzerland, Leary runs into Andy Warhol at a party. "There are only three real geniuses in America," Greenfield quotes him as saying to Warhol. "You and me, and the third changes all the time." Less true words were never spoken.

No scene in the book captures that lost hope better than an encounter between Leary and Charles Manson, who occupied an adjacent room in solitary confinement at Folsom Prison in the mid-1970s. Compared with Manson, Timothy Leary was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The transcription of their conversations comes from Leary's own writings and therefore isn't particularly reliable, but it still illuminates.

Manson: "We were all your students, you know. You had everyone looking up to you. You could have led the people anywhere you wanted.... And you didn't tell them what to do."

Leary: "I didn't want to impose my realities. The idea is that everybody takes responsibility for his nervous system, creates his own reality. Anything else is brainwashing."

Manson: "That was your mistake. No one wants responsibility. Everyone wants to be told what to do, what to believe, what's really true and really real."

More than anyone else, Leary embodied the mixed-up dreams of the '60s. It's sad that Charles Manson saw into the American psyche more accurately than he did. If Leary's ideals got flushed away so quickly, like a stash in an airport bathroom, he couldn't possibly have been right.

Leary's life was one of those rare American ones with a second act. After the 1970s he moved to Beverly Hills, went on a political minstrel-show lecture tour with G. Gordon Liddy, snorted coke in the Playboy Mansion with Hugh Hefner

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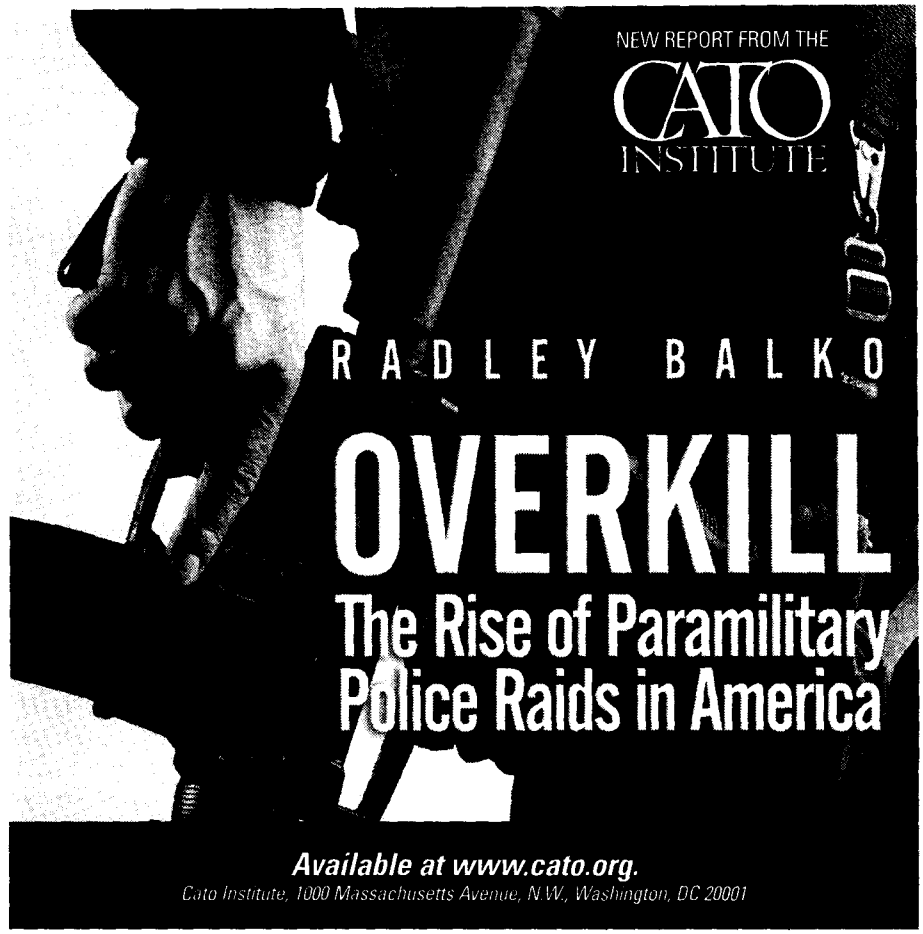
and hung out at the Viper Room. He also developed some of the earliest interactive computer games. What lessons are we to learn from such a life? Obviously, the specifics don't apply to us ordinary mortals. And we certainly don't want to follow Leary's lead in terms of family life. As Greenfield painstakingly details, he was a serially bad husband and an even worse father. Leary's careerism, while quintessentially American, was corrosive and destructive, another warning siren against the false promises of celebrity-obsessed modernity.

Yet his life contained surprising pockets of peace, extraordinary grace notes. When Leary's famous commune in Millbrook, New York, wasn't being raided by local authorities or invaded by trashy jet-setting hipsters, people achieved transcendence there, or at least had a lot of fun. As Greenfield writes, "When Charlie Mingus heard the tap in the sink yowling, followed by banging noises, he took out his bass and began playing counterpoint." Of all the crazy scenes in the book, that's the one I would have most liked to see, though I also enjoyed the one where Leary's wife attempts a seduction of Jerry Brown in order to blackmail Leary out of prison.

Used in the right doses by the right people, under controlled circumstances, certain drugs have creative potential. Despite Leary's many ego-fueled missteps, his ideas about the transformative powers of psychedelic drugs still hold some water. In his mind-bending book *Breaking Open the Head*, Daniel Pinchbeck—who is rapidly becoming our generation's foremost proponent of controlled psychedelic experimentation—called Leary the "central villain in the psychedelic saga...naïve, charismatic, sloppy, self-promotional and out of control." It's hard to argue with that assessment, but in later interviews, Pinchbeck softened this view, saying that Leary was a product of his time, a temporal blip in human understanding of psychedelic substances.

While I find Leary's writing bloated, self-absorbed and, let's face it, hippy-dippy and dated, Pinchbeck makes a far more persuasive, modern case for psychedelics. *Breaking Open the Head* is *The Doors of Perception* written from a skeptical East Village perspective. Pinchbeck's latest book, *2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl*, expands on his thesis, arguing that psychedelics may be opening a portal to a transformation of consciousness that has the potential to change the world forever.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I can't say whether I believe that or not, and I certainly hope the Phoenix Suns win an NBA title before this evolution happens, but Pinchbeck's skeptical, analytic reportorial approach to the subject appeals to my brain far more than Leary's musty counterculture rhetoric.

It was, in fact, Pinchbeck who led me to start experimenting with psychedelic drugs again last year. I had neither the time, the resources nor the physical energy to go on an acid trip again, and I didn't have much interest, either. But I was really into the idea of trying something called *Salvia divinorum*. Salvia is a branch of the sage family that has long been known to have psychotropic qualities. According to Pinchbeck, the trips are short, pleasant and revelatory (though not to be taken lightly), and they don't cause much of a hangover. Salvia visions tend to center around a whimsical spirit that appears to be half-woman, half-plant. She occupies a domain that appears as a combination of fairy garden wonderland and surrealist painting. That sounded interesting to me.

I did some research and found the dosage I thought would suit me best. Though the drug is still legal where I live, it's sold in some pretty sketchy stores. I found one and made the buy. Later that night, I settled into my easy chair with a big cup of water by my side and smoked a bowl. Immediately, I felt myself being pressed back into my chair, and then I closed my eyes. I traveled through a series of doors that slammed behind me as I passed them, while hearing a strange, but not scary, rhythmic chant, something along the lines of "welcome, welcome," and then I was hurtling through space. I landed in a garden, and sure enough I met the spirit. She showed me around for a couple of minutes, and then I opened my eyes. The trip was over.

About ten days later I went on another voyage, which proved pretty similar. Another night I smoked the Salvia; it seemed to have little effect. I fell asleep instead of tripping. In the middle of the night, I perceived that a flash of light had filled the room, though it didn't wake up my wife. I heard, and even felt, an enormous thud. A squat, thick stone warrior was standing at the foot of my bed, unmoving, unspeaking. It was like he'd been sent to me as a gift or an offering, or maybe a warning.

Dude. That was freaky.

Salvia has definitely altered my perception of the world. I now walk around wondering if there really are other dimensions out there, untouched and unnoticed by our under-used brains. Timothy Leary would have been proud. But if we can learn anything from Leary's experience, it's that we don't need drug prophets, and that collective tripping isn't going to transform reality; it's just going to shift our present reality around a little. I share my experience because I think it's interesting, not because I recommend it. This is my trip, and I'm not going to lay it on anyone else. ■

The Global Village

NELL FREUDENBERGER

ALENTEJO BLUE. By Monica Ali. Scribner. 226 pp. $24.

When *Brick Lane* was published three years ago, Monica Ali was hailed as a great nineteenth-century novelist who just happened to have published her first book in 2003. Born in Dhaka, Bangladesh, to a Bengali father and an English mother, and raised in England, Ali wrote about an immigrant experience unfamiliar to most English readers. *Brick Lane* was nominated for the Man Booker Prize, among other awards, and *The New Republic*'s James Wood cited it as an example of immigrant literature with the potential to "return fiction to its nineteenth century gravity." Such praise could make a writer cautious, inviting her to recycle her success; at worst, it could turn into a lead weight, preventing her from even starting a new project.

Ali seems to have been untroubled by that weight of expectation: Her new novel, *Alentejo Blue*, is a genuine departure, a bold experiment in narration that presents a multitude of complex characters within a relatively short book. *Brick Lane* is the story of Nazneen, a young Bangladeshi woman who moves to one of London's South Asian ghettos to marry a much older man. The story is told almost exclusively from her point of view and takes place primarily in the couple's small apartment; the novel's precise beauty comes from the very insularity of Nazneen's world. While *Alentejo Blue* unfolds in a similarly claustrophobic community, the book's succession of narrators gives it a more fluid, expansive kind of grace. If *Brick Lane* belonged stylistically to the nineteenth century, the new book jumps forward in time. Modernist in form (the epigraph is from T.S. Eliot's "Ash-Wednesday"), it explores the decidedly twenty-first-century obsession with what is foreign and what is local, and how the mysterious category of the "global" might break down that distinction.

Alentejo Blue takes place almost entirely in Mamarrosa, a village in Portugal's south-central Alentejo region, known for its cork and olive trees. The village is either impossibly backward or heartbreakingly picturesque, depending on which character is observing it. The nine narrators include three natives of Mamarrosa, three expatriates and three tourists. All of the chapters are written in the third person (except for two); each character has his or her own chapter (except for one young couple, who share). Trying to generalize about *Alentejo Blue* makes you aware that it's the kind of novel that breeds exceptions; although certain local events carry through the chapters, each character's preoccupations dominate the narrative landscape for as long as he or she is center stage.

Apart from the private dramas of its inhabitants, there isn't a lot going on in Mamarrosa. João, who is 84 when the novel begins and whose chapter includes memories of the Salazar dictatorship—in effect, giving the book a historical preamble—is the only character whose chapter takes place in the past. Two present-day story lines involve the whole village, but they're more like pieces of gossip than plots. The first is the plight of the Potts family: Chrissie has left England with her husband, the unsubtly named Michael "China" Potts, who is conducting stoned experiments in raising livestock on a rundown farm in Mamarrosa. Their promiscuous teenage daughter, Ruby, is constantly getting herself in trouble with the village's male population, while her younger brother, Jay, plays truant, roaming the countryside on his bike. Mamarrosa's inhabitants are happy to whisper about the Pottses, but the bigger story is the eagerly anticipated return of Marco Afonso Rodrigues, a local boy

Nell Freudenberger is the author of Lucky Girls, *a collection of stories. Her novel* The Dissident *will be published in August.*

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who left town, got rich and is supposedly coming home to build a luxury hotel.

The most obvious difficulty for a novelist with so many main characters is sufficiently distinguishing one from the next. Some writers are ventriloquists, capable of mimicking many different voices—Jonathan Franzen, Zadie Smith and David Mitchell come to mind—but Ali is an expert with gesture; even minor characters appear in attitudes that are particular and unforgettable. Dona Rosa Maria, the mortician's daughter, "had an overbite and a way of holding her hands behind her back that made it look as if she were hiding something, a pancreas, perhaps, or a kidney." And when Ruby Potts steals a pair of sunglasses from Vasco, the cafe owner, he is seen passing "a hand over the postcards, comics, chewing gum, toy guns, and sunglasses, perhaps to divine what else was missing, perhaps to comfort his remaining stock." Ali's language is unadorned, but these snapshots have a poetic compression—they are the pictures you wish you'd taken on vacation, rather than the ones you did.

Twenty-year-old Teresa, a Mamarrosa native, is Ali's most dynamic character. When her chapter opens, she has a letter in her pocket offering her a job as an au pair in London. In *Brick Lane* Ali was concerned with the opposition between fate and free will: Nazneen, a devout Muslim, has repeatedly been told a story about how she almost died as an infant—"How You Were Left to Your Fate"—but lived. Once she is in London, Nazneen experiences an increasing (and increasingly conflicted) awareness of her power to determine her own destiny. In *Alentejo Blue* Ali continues to think about agency and the power to make choices; however, in this novel that power is more or less taken for granted. It is the characters' freedom that paralyzes them, even in the moments when they believe they're sure of what they want to do. In Vasco's cafe Teresa sees Harry Stanton, an expatriate English novelist living in Mamarrosa: "Suddenly she was filled with rage. She drained the last of her beer. Don't be so stupid, she told herself. You are going to London and he has come here. What is wrong with that?" There is, of course, something wrong with that, and Teresa recognizes it: Why should she go to London if British citizens are choosing to settle down in her hometown? If Teresa were the kind of girl who quoted lines of poetry (which, thankfully, she is not), she might have extended Ali's epigraph: "And place is always and only place/And what is actual is actual only for one time/And only for one place."

The novel opens with a suicide: João cuts the rope and lifts Rui—the love of his life, whom he's held only once before—from a tree in the woods. Ali explores the relationship between these two men with empathy; their mutual attraction was and remains taboo in the social world of the Portuguese village. As she demonstrated in *Brick Lane,* she has an unusual ability to write convincingly from the point of view of someone much less educated than herself, and she is particularly perceptive about the way the various social distinctions of village society make themselves felt. Several chapters after Rui's suicide, Teresa dutifully visits João in his one-room house and feels by comparison painfully sophisticated: "She almost envied his simple life. The headaches he had never known. The certainty of each day like the last. The protection of not wanting more." Ali deftly communicates the irony that, of course, João's complicated life was defined by "wanting more"—something that Teresa might have to leave Mamarrosa in order to understand.

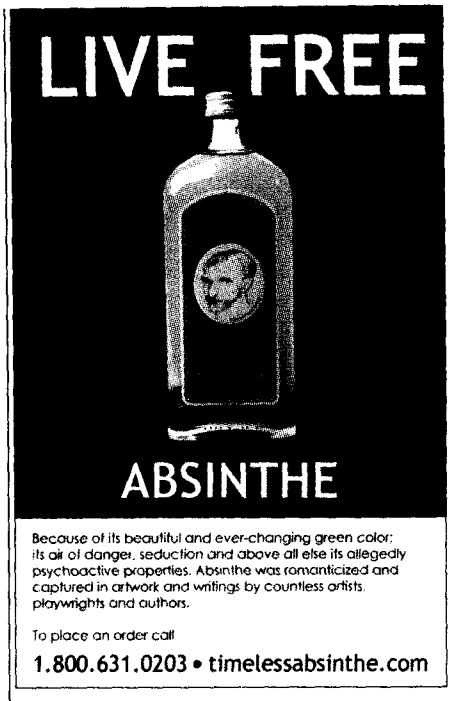
Teresa sees João in the same way that the tourists see her. By juxtaposing their two perspectives, Ali asks what it is that makes us a local or a stranger in a certain place, and whether that difference is as absolute as is commonly believed. It's the Pottses' poignantly hopeful son, Jay, who puts the question best:

> "Am I Portuguese now?" Jay asked once.
>
> Chrissie didn't look sure. "Suppose so."
>
> "Don't be bleeding soft," said China.
>
> "'Course you're bleeding not."

But Jay, who speaks Portuguese with a thick local accent, who loves the landscape and who not once in the course of the novel thinks of England, may be as Portuguese as any of the Mamarrosa natives. Whether that's a good thing—a postcolonial correction for dangerous nationalisms—or a weakening of the regional character that keeps the world vital, Ali leaves for the reader to decide.

Alentejo Blue is at its best when it raises these questions lightly. Ali is especially talented with dialogue, and as her characters struggle to get through to one another, they reveal themselves to the reader. In one of the book's finest moments, Stanton meets Jay walking in the woods:

> "You're English," the boy said. Stanton had not noticed him approach.
>
> "Hello, compatriot," he said.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The boy grew unsure. He beheaded flowers with his stick.

"We're both English," said Stanton.

The beautifully subtle growing boy decapitating flowers, and Stanton's failed attempt to make a connection with Jay, give the moment its particular humor and its pathos. There are many similar conversations in the novel, indirect dialogue that shows how rare genuine communication really is. It's to Ali's credit that these misunderstandings happen as often between "compatriots" as they do between locals and foreigners.

Ali is most interested in the thematic points where these people—Portuguese, expatriate and tourist—intersect. In spite of the considerable differences among her narrators, she reflects through each of them on the nature of storytelling, the question of where a person belongs—in his or her birthplace, or as far as possible from that spot—and on the nature of choice. Vasco, who has been to America and never tires of discussing it, scorns his provincial neighbors "whose biggest decision has been whether to paint the door frame yellow or blue." The characters' musings on choice range from the philosophical (João notices that a bird "never has to think about what to do next") to the absurd (Vasco wonders at great length whether or not to eat a piece of cake). When Chrissie is investigated by the local police for her role in her daughter's abortion, she speculates that prison might not be all that bad: "All this business of what to do next, how to do it, when to do it, why you're doing it. Well, they take that off you, don't they?" Each of these individual moments rings true, but as they accrete the characters' ideas begin to blend together. By the time Ali introduces Huw and Sophie, a young English couple spending a holiday in the Alentejo, their existential worries seem tiresome, dictated more by the novel than by their own, otherwise distinctly drawn personalities.

More satisfying than these thematic touchstones are the literal ways the characters intersect. Eileen, a third English tourist, sees a poster of Nelson Paulo Cavaco and is charmed; Teresa is bored by the singer, judging him overrated; Jay plays soccer with Cavaco's son. Recurring motifs create a sestina-like effect: Pigs, for example, appear in several chapters, as do candles and the color blue. Teresa, who is planning to lose her virginity before she leaves for London, gets ready to meet her boyfriend: "She wore her black slingbacks and a white cotton dress with blue flowers that matched the paint that framed the door. Alentejo blue. There she was, in a picture, in a moment, setting out for the rest of her life."

I can't think of another novel with a structure exactly like that of *Alentejo Blue*. Each chapter has the duration of a short story, but the pace is expansive and novelistic, and the episodes don't stand alone. Reading the novel is a little like hitchhiking through unfamiliar countryside: You become so involved in the driver's story that you're surprised each time one of the characters stops to let you off.

For that reason, the end of the novel poses a technical problem. The Alentejo is famous for its polyphonic choral groups, and the last chapter brings all the characters together to "sing" their separate parts in unison, each narrating a section. It is a promising conceit that ultimately disappoints: Ali excels at developing characters slowly, steeping them in richness and depth from the inside—not panning quickly across their faces. In João's section, the old men of the village make a toast to their recently deceased friend, Rui. When João raises his glass, the gesture has a special bitterness; it gives his story an ending but leaves us wondering what happened to the middle. And Ali has to stretch to make the very premise of a reunion plausible: Eileen, the tourist who was visiting Mamarrosa in the summer, happens to be in town looking for a house just in time to attend the annual Mamarrosa *festa* with the other characters. A few times in the last chapter, Ali is reduced to using a kitschy, omniscient collective voice that sounds weak and unmoored: "Some minor complaints notwithstanding, it was generally agreed to be the best festa ever, something that was agreed every year."

As the *festa* heats up, and more and more sparkling wine is consumed, the villagers start to demand an account of the newly returned Marco Afonso Rodrigues's life. "A life is never simple," Marco responds: "A story is never true." Whether it's Harry Stanton, who sleeps with Chrissie in order to write about her, or Teresa, who has a talent for observation that makes her a kind of potential writer, storytelling is one of *Alentejo Blue*'s preoccupations. But when Teresa thinks of telling stories about Mamarrosa to her new English employers, she runs into a problem: "First, she'd have to explain about Vasco, tell them what he was like. And also Mamarrosa; you couldn't understand unless you knew about this place." A good story must do more than just describe a place, but it's also true that writers fall in love with particular patches of ground. The best stories understand that a place is as complicated as the people in it: It can only be captured in flashes, which cease to exist as soon as they are written down. ■

FILMS

With Feathers

STUART KLAWANS

LUNACY • SCOOP

It's wrong to understand a film solely through its maker's words, but since the very substance of *Lunacy* is error—psychological, physiological, metaphysical, pataphysical—I may as well screw up from the start by quoting Jan Svankmajer's onscreen introduction. He stands before you in a conspicuously empty space, a white-haired, white-bearded man of mournful countenance, and speaks over a faint clatter. It sounds like sprockets passing through a cogwheel. Did the crew fail to muffle the camera's noise? Or is somebody, somewhere, running an old 16-millimeter projector?

"What you are about to see," Svankmajer says, apparently oblivious to the interference, "is a horror film, with all the degeneracy peculiar to that genre. It is not a work of art. Today, art is all but dead anyway." That being the case, "our film may be regarded as an infantile tribute to the works of Edgar Allan Poe, from which it takes certain themes and images, and to the Marquis de Sade, to whom it owes its blasphemy and subversion." As if distracted, Svankmajer looks down at his feet. A severed tongue

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is creeping energetically across the wooden floorboards, bunching itself like an inchworm. Svankmajer, unfazed, goes on. "In essence, our story concerns a philosophical debate over how best to run a lunatic asylum," or something. Do you think I can write this all down? I know I've botched some of it, but the basic idea is this: While one side in the debate argues for complete freedom and the other advocates control and punishment, either way is better than the method of having both at once, as we do in "the madhouse we live in today."

Having survived two-thirds of twentieth-century Czech history, Svankmajer is entitled to make such judgments. But he's already gone, and in his place we see the hanging carcass of a pig—a very, very long pig—which splits open at the top with a zipping, slurping, ripping sound. Guts spill out in profusion, and as the camera pans down along the pink flesh the gash continues to open, as if sliced by vision itself, while more and more intestines tumble forward in a squiggly pile.

Our story begins:

No, to tell the story would be an even worse mistake than repeating Svankmajer's explanation. Better to stick to details. *Lunacy* takes place simultaneously in today's Central Europe—where there are cheap bluejeans, broken computers, exhaust-spewing passenger vans and light bulbs with a yellowish cast—and in a late-eighteenth-century France of horse-drawn carriages, powdered wigs, cocked hats and candlelight. The protagonist, a youngish fellow named Jean Berlot (Pavel Liska), travels about with a cloth bag slung over his shoulder and a broken-toothed comb in his pocket—a keepsake from his dead mother—with which he sometimes tugs at his dark and wiry hair. His eyes are slitlike and timid, his overbite pronounced, his cheeks grubbily stubbled, his stance apologetic. It takes just one direct glance from a pretty woman—such as lithe, red-headed Charlota (Anna Geislerová), first glimpsed at a country inn—for a fool like this to fall in love.

For the first half of *Lunacy*, though, Jean gets only a few more intermittent looks at Charlota. Mostly he's ensnared by the Marquis (Jan Tríska), a square-jawed old dandy given to tonsils-baring outbursts of laughter and eloquent, vituperative monologues. He can be soothing and generous, too, or at least he can seem so, since a weak character such as Jean needs to be kept and controlled by kindness, sometimes, instead of loud intimidation and the waving of antique pistols. The "blasphemy and subversion" that Svankmajer mentions in his introduction? The Marquis shows Jean plenty of that, once he's taken the stray home. The pranks include a black mass in which large portions of chocolate cake (or is it some other brown, gooey stuff?) substitute for the wafer, and the kiss of fellowship is replaced by a rite that involves Charlota's bare buttocks.

There are sudden knocks in the night, in his dreams, that terrify Jean.

Without pausing to recount the premature burial, I will go on to say that the second half of *Lunacy* is a dramatization—some drama!—of Poe's tale "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether." Clucking chickens and cackling gowned patients swarm chaotically through the grandiose old building where Jean now finds himself voluntarily confined, in a lunatic asylum where "art therapy" entails the flinging of paint at a mute naked woman and Charlota shows up again as a nurse, or maybe a prisoner, or perhaps (if the Marquis is to be believed) a devious nymphomaniac who likes it kinky with the superintendent. The patients keep ripping open the pillows, so the air is always thick with feathers, as well as poultry.

So much for the live action. In between these scenes, as punctuation or commentary or a form of higher dramatization, are sequences of the stop-motion animation for which Svankmajer is most famous. Scored to a hurdy-gurdy waltz, these segments feature writhing lumps of meat, skittering brains, excitedly rolling eyeballs, extremely loose tongues, all living busy lives of their own. They slide through windows and down dank dungeon walls, copulate on surgical tables, shoot at targets, grow explosively within cages, invade bleached animal skulls, hatch from eggs, hurry up the sides of a grinder and spurt out again in wormlike strands to be pecked by chickens. The effect, as advertised, is horrific (especially when Svankmajer cuts to a sudden, emphatic close-up) but also funny and always appropriate, in a way you wouldn't care to explain.

Perhaps history is a nightmare from which meat is trying to awake. Or meat is the nightmare from which history wants to awake. I know this much: When the Marquis stages a celebratory *tableau vivant* of Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, populated by asylum inmates and starring a bare-bosomed Charlota, the lunatic crouching by her ankles can restrain himself only so long before he leaps to her right breast, mouthing it as avidly as if it were meat. Jean intervenes strongly; he insists that humans have

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souls, and women must be respected. But it's not clear whether Charlota at this point regards Jean as a savior, a chump or a spoilsport.

I know this, too: After the Marquis's riot of liberty comes the violence of order. There is regime change. We learn why severed tongues have been crawling on the floor, and we may remember that Svankmajer knows, from experience, about people who are kept silent for their own good.

I cannot call *Lunacy* a masterpiece. The category can mean nothing unless an artist aspires to it, and this film, by Svankmajer's reckoning, isn't art at all. So maybe I should quote Frank Zappa, a foreigner who has been admired in Prague, who once remarked that his recordings were not so much music as "a useful household product." Fine. *Lunacy* will scour cant from your mental walls, unclog grimy sentiment from the drain of your heart, put the shine back on those scuffed eyes and ears, and leave your whole earthly domicile smelling as fresh as ground chuck.

Line up outside New York's Film Forum—and then other theaters nationwide—starting August 9. Want more? Last year Kino on Video and KimStim released a DVD anthology of Svankmajer's shorts, and they will release an equally mad disc of Jiri Barta's animations come September.

Although television producers have adapted it twice, in 1972 and 1987, Evelyn Waugh's novel *Scoop* may have found its cinematic moment only now, when a dim and credulous press has helped torch Iraq. Some version of Waugh's hapless journalist William Boot ought to be on the screen today, blundering about Ishmaelia in pursuit of a war he doesn't know how to cover. What we get under the name of *Scoop*, though, is merely a comedy about Anglo-American flirtation and amateur sleuthing, dashed off by Woody Allen with all the fire of your Uncle Harry searching his pockets for his keys.

Am I wrong to think the style is doddering? Maybe I've been taken in too well by Allen's performance as Sid Waterman (*aka* Splendini), a stage magician with a wardrobe patterned after old wallpaper and a repertory of tricks plucked straight off a dusty shelf. It is Allen's conceit in *Scoop* that a London music-hall audience would indulge the fumferring Splendini, as we in the movie house are expected to smile in fond reminiscence at Allen's shtick. We've seen it all before, including the gag where the magic actually works, and where the conspicuously lovely young woman falls in with the codger.

This time, the beautiful partner is Sondra (Scarlett Johansson), an American college student and would-be journalist, whose presence in London is no more plausible than Splendini's. The miracle—strange, how many miracles occur in the films of the forthrightly irreligious Allen—takes place when Sondra mounts the stage as a volunteer for Splendini, so he can make her disappear. Instead of vanishing, though, she finds herself face to face with a materialization: the ghost of a recently deceased British reporter (Ian McShane) who has one last story to break and Sondra as his medium.

Sondra is momentarily shaken; but the disruptiveness of a supernatural outburst cannot compete with the reassurance, the coziness, of auteurist self-reference. She recovers quickly enough to enlist Splendini as her research partner. But why does she need him? And why would he go along with her, now that Woody Allen understands he can be no more than avuncular toward a 21-year-old? It's only so we can get a London-based *Manhattan Murder Mystery* on top of Allen's other recyclings: of the scene of memorial chatter in *Broadway Danny Rose*, the wonder-workings in *Alice* and *Oedipus Wrecks* and *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, the pastiches of Ingmar Bergman. Even Allen's impersonation of an American vulgarian set loose among British gentry has a nostalgic air, for anyone who remembers the much sharper Jew-in-the-heartlands humor of *Annie Hall*.

Familiarity may offer pleasure of an undemanding kind. But I can detect only lassitude when Allen's average punch line, delivered after a buildup of half a dozen stammers, is, "They'll take us to the Tower of London and behead us!" From this zone of snoozy comfort, *Scoop* stirs only when dealing with Sondra's ambition. To get her story, she will let a man take her to bed—for which act Allen shows her neither scorn nor condescension. This is the wide-awake moment in *Scoop*. But when it comes to conveying any sense of what might happen in that bed, the film nods off again into an old man's fancy—despite Sondra's falling in love with an aristocrat who is the perfect, and perfectly gorgeous, Hugh Jackman.

I'm glad that Allen had a nice London vacation with Scarlett Johansson. Very thoughtful of him to scrawl this picture postcard to us, about their time together. It doesn't matter, I suppose, that he slapped over it the title of a film we could actually use right now. Timeliness is a primary criterion of journalism, not of art.

But even comic ghost stories need a pulse. ■

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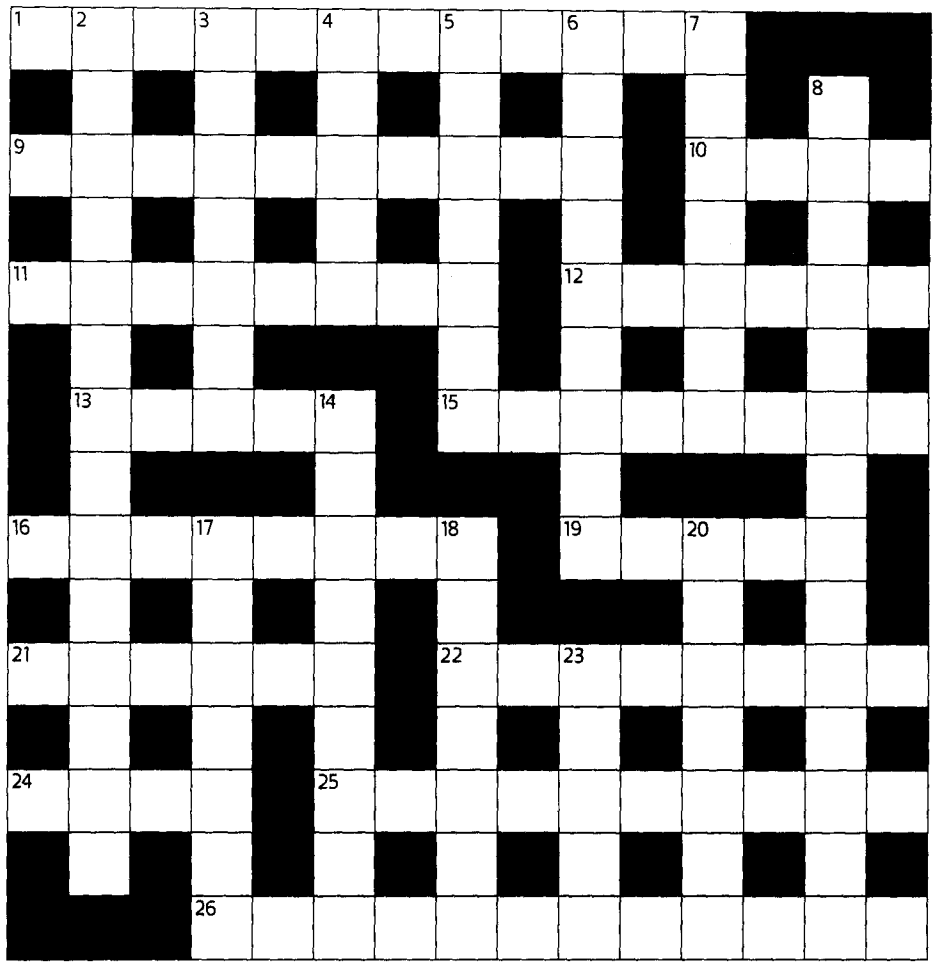


ACROSS

1 Not a gatherer of that green stuff, but a little bread gets to sort of sing with a musical sound. (7,5)

9 Where to find a shoemaker if he has a six-foot working device, finally. (2,4,4)

10 Otherwise cupid has a painful return. (4)

11 One might have to do it to vote, concerning the heart of the matter with a return of what follows "dough" as one hears. (8)

12 and **2** down Perhaps fee got improperly but evidently not on the right legend, to make a bad start. (3,3,2,3,5,4)

13 Where Moses was found in the orchestra, too. (5)

15 Disappeared with a fresh return, and marble, always old. (4,4)

16 Aims of UN not so good, and well-known for the wrong reason. (8)

19 Difficult roles, but a bad one is not good when it comes to sport. (5)

21 Where a nonworking actor might be suggesting a print job. (3-3)

22 Well-adapted copy, put inside. (8)

24 See 4 down

25 Goes to the Wabash with what sounds like a rather unsteady little craft! (10)

26 Perhaps less seen, but hops around it in despair. (12)

DOWN

2 See 12 across

3 Like the MGM trademark, or Durocher's team? (7)

4 and **24** across Evening dress? (9)

5 Box tier? The English type may be something of a nuisance. (7)

6 A short month past, a point Mr. Gore made to describe a certain many-sided one. (9)

7 Direction a disorganized cartel took, showing an abettor of matricide. (7)

8 Fires this to take advantage of Old Glory shares. (14)

14 Just a brief stay in the field—in position with underwear and a "tank." (9)

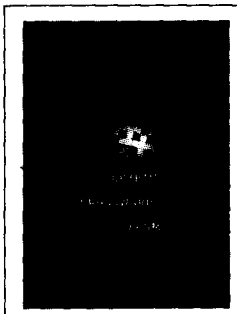
17 Doth thith drink make the heart grow fonder? (7)

18 Something that could cut the head covering, taking overhead transport in some places. (7)

20 How to nourish you and me, when in a nasty spot. (7)

23 What one sometimes does with spuds and gets to take a nap, when rising. (5)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.



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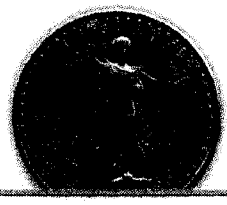

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